LADAK. 32

The Reasoning of Christ and his Apostles in their Defence of Christianity considered

IN SEVEN

SERMONS

Preached at

Hackney in Middlesex,

INTHE

Months of November and December 1724.

To which is Prefixed,

A PREFACE taking Notice of the false Representations of Christianity and of the Apostles Reasoning in Desence of it, in a Book intitled, The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion.

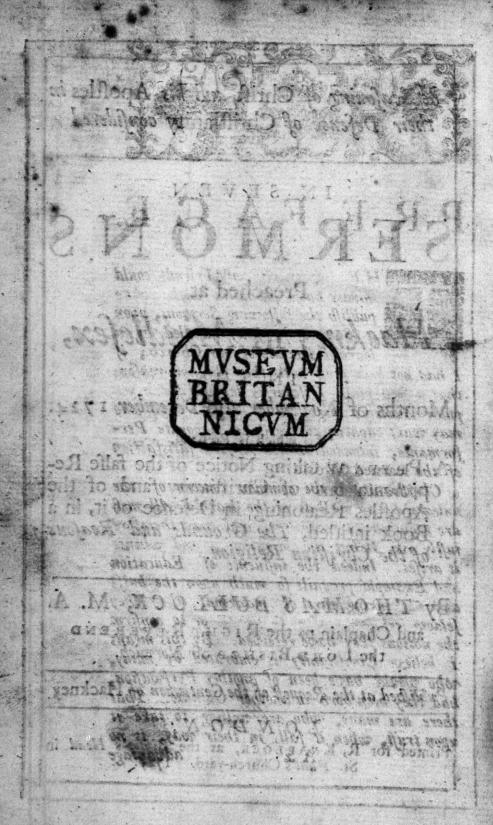
By THOMAS BULLOCK, M. A.

and Chaplain to the RIGHT REVEREND the LORD BISHOP of Norwich.

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PREFACE.



HE importunity of Friends could bardly have prevailed with me to publish the following Sermons, upon a Subjett fo fully bandled by a learned Prelate of our Church; if

I had not been prest with this plausible reason, that a sew plain Discourses designed for a popular Audience might be of use to many, who may want capacity to digest an elaborate Performance, intended chiesly for the satisfaction

of the learned World.

Christianity is the common concern of the unlearn'd, as well as of the learn'd. All men are required to receive it, and may therefore justly ask, What the obligation is and whence it arises. Indeed the influence of Education and Example prevails so much upon the built and umbinking part of mankind, that they feldom feek for reasons to correct or to confirm the notions they have received. By this means I believe Christianity is embraced by many, who would have been of another Persuafion. had they been born in another Climate, there are many, who are willing to take it upon trust, when it falls in their way, is no AZ advantage advantage to true Religion: the Professors it gains thereby are but Creatures of Chance, the Proselytes it is deprived of thereby are innumerable.

One unhappy cause of this indolent dependance upon so precarious a bottom, is a notion, That the arguments proper to be considered and attended to, by one that would make a rational choice of his Religion, require more application and understanding than falls to the share of the bulk of mankind. This I believe is not true of Christianity or the Arguments urged in defence of it. The Point, which seems to lie most out of the reach of ordinary Capacities, is the determination of this Question, Whether the Gospel be a credible well-attested History. It is true, the unlearned Inquirer may not have leifure or capacity to search into other ancient writings and records of antiquity to satisfy himself, Whether the Gospel-History be of the same, or later date than is pretended; whether the writers of it are any where recorded as men of suspicious characters; or whether their relation clashes with any other credible History of the fame times. But to his great satisfaction he may observe, that this search has been made for him, by Persons wanting neither application, nor understanding, nor zeal to discover every the minutest flaw that could be found in the Gospel-History; (I mean the adversaries of Christianity) who have not been able to fix any tolerable Suspicion of fraud or unfaithfulness thereupon: From whence he may rationally conclude, that 'tis liable to no just suspicion; which, if it had, would

PREFACE

would long ago have been discovered by the in-

defatigable Patrons of infidelity.

I would therefore suppose a Person, altogether unskilled in records of Antiquity, reasoning with himself in this manner. We Here is " a History before me of such a nature, that every serious person at least must have thought " bimself concern'd to be resolved about the et truth or fallbood of it; the Fatts related ce therein are of such a kind, as must book ec raised the curiosity and attention of most er men; and then they are faid to have been es done in such a publick open Manner, that " if they had been forged, it is impossible to conceive, bow the forgery should remain un-" detected. For if I would suppose them ce forged, when shall I suppose the story to 66 have been first made publick? Could it " bave been publisht with the least success, within ten or twenty years after the facts in s question were pretended to be done? It is impossible. For instance, if a Sect of men " should now arise, pretending they had been " followers of a famous Prophet, who a few es Years ago had made himself remarkable in " London, and other populous parts of Engce land for his Miracles; going up and down " thro' Cities and Villages for above three ce Years together, healing all manner of 66 fickness and all manner of diseases among the people with a touch, or with a word's 66 speaking; commanding the blind to see; the " lame to walk; the deaf to hear; the dumb to speak, and the dead to rise again ! till by fuch works as these (which " be did in the mast publick manner) his fame and his interest among the people grew to " such a degree, that the Government thought " it necessary to put a stop to it by taking a-way his life; and to prevent any future " spam pretence of a Resurrection, order'd a s first guard to be kept at his grave; where 44 notwithstanding his body did not remain es after the third day; which put his Enemies to the poor faift of saying it was folin, whilft the watch slept. If such a flory bould be now forged, I cannot conceive how it should meet with the least credit, or bave any influence upon the weakest Brain. Could se the Authors of it find any encouragement to s perfift in it? Would it not fink under the weight of its own notorious falfbood? Or if it met with any credit, and a growing Sect began to be form'd thereupon, would not " History take notice of it, and effectually expose it to after-ages, as the most consummate se piece of impudence and forgery, that the " world ever produced? - Undoubtedly. es Is then this the case with respect to the " Gofpel-History? Are there any ancient rece eards which represent it in this light? "Though I have not leifure or capacity to " fearch into this matter my felf, yet am I well affured there are none, because the " adversaries of Christianity, who want neither skill nor application for the purpole, bave made no such discovery; and I can as safely depend upon their Silence, as upon my d own Search in this matter. It could not therefore be forged within ten or twenty cc years

years after the date of the Facts. Could it ce be done with more success about a Gentury es or two lower? The fame reasoning convince ces me that 'tis impossible. For suppose is of King James the first there appeared first of King James the first, there appeared such a Prophet, who lived, and died, and escaped the grave in the like remarkable manner ce that from thenceforth bis Disciples proclaim'd bim living, went up and down make ing thousands of Converts every where, till et at last they sealed their Testimony with their ce blood; that a growing Selt was form's thereupon subsisting to this very day. If such a story should now be made publick should not " I, or any other unskilful man, stand amazed et at it, instead of giving it credit? We " Should bardly think it worth while to ask, who ever heard of it; or where are any of footsteps of a Sect form'd thereupon? ec But if it should gain any credit, I cannot et doubt but History would sufficiently expose it 44 to Posterity. That this has not been done us with respect to Christianity, I am satisfied from the silence of its faithful Adversaries. 46 And the same reasons convince me, that the 46 Gospel-History could not be forged in any 46 Age or Century later; that the Writers of it are not recorded as men of suspicious chace racters; and that their relation of Facts does not clash with any other credible Hi-Thus the unlearned Inquirer, who has not uch time for andications

Thus the unlearned Inquirer, who has not much time for application, nor the advantages of learning to direct his search among the A 4 records.

and Reafons, p. 4.

A Section 1

records of Antiquity, may with a tolerable degree of common sense come at a rational fatisfaction about the Gospel-History; and may safely conclude, from the indefatigable, but unsuccessful Pains of its Adversaries, that a History, which has been able to stand the test of the se-verest scrutiny, must be a very credible one, and may (if any elfe can) be safely relied upon. Being capable of satisfaction on this Head; other points in contest will lie more within the reach of ordinary Capacities: Especially those, which have been lately brought in question by an Anonymous Author in a Book intitled, The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion. Wherein he pretends from the Writings of the Apostles to undermine the Doctrine taught by them. But so unfair are bis Citations, so gross bis Misinterpretations of Scripture; and commonly so poor bis sophistry, where be pretends to reason; that I can bardly doubt but the unlearn'd Reader, with his Bible before him, may be made sensible thereof.

Christianity, as he has painted it, has not a natural feature left; be bas set it in a point of light, which I believe no man ever view'd it in. Instead of considering it as a new Revelation, a Doctrine pretended to be from God immediately; He Jays Christianity is founded on Judaism, the New Testament on the Old in such a manner, that it is the defign + Grounds of the Authors of the New, to prove all the parts of Christianity from the Old Testament +, as having its divine Authority \$ 1b.p. 91 from thence \$; that it is not properly a

New Law, but Judaism explain'd and set

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in a due light *; but that the Old Testament . 1b. p. 15. is the Canon of Christians, and yet the fole true Canon of Scripture +. That the truth + 1b. p. 13. of Christianity depends, as it ought, on ancient Revelations contain'd in the Old Testament ‡; that Jesus and his Apostles ‡ 1b. p. 25. grounded Christianity on Proofs | from | 1b. p. 27. thence, being destitute of other or external Arguments *. But these Proofs taken out * 1b. p. 31. of the Old and urged in the New Testa-ment, being not to be found in the Old Testament, or not urged in the New according to their literal and obvious sense, are therefore no Proofs according to scholastick Rules †. Yet the Authors of the Books of † Ib. p. 39. the New Testament always argue absolutely. from the quotations they make out of the Books of the Old Testament t, with Gentiles as \$ 1b. p. 79 well as Jews: To both whom therefore they reason'd Allegorically ||. That St. Paul scems || Ib. p. 80. to disclaim all other methods of arguing befides the Allegorical *. Nay that all other . 1b. p. 92. methods of arguing were wholly discarded, and the Allegorical reasoning set up by them (the Apostles) as the true and only reasoning proper to bring all men to the faith of Christ f. + 1b. 1.94. This is the view he has given us of Christi-

anity. I need not tell the Reader what inferences are drawn from it: neither will be have any occasion to inquire, if it appears in every article of it to be false and groundless, the pure invention of him who made it, having not only no foundation in the New Testament, from whence only it should be taken, but utterly subverted by it. In

proving

13. 9. 27.

proving this I shall consider every article apart, and show the false fallacious Grounds upon which it is built.

1. Christianity is not founded upon Judaism, nor was it ever intended to prove all the parts of it from the Old Testament. For the Christ and his Apostles did in many cases, disputing with the Jews, appeal to the Old Testament to remove their objections; yet they did not build upon this, as their foundation; but upon a Commission, they pretended to have from God immediately, to publish a new Dostrine to the world. Christ tells the Jews that he came down from Heaven, that he came in his Father's name, and that the works which the Father had given him to finish bore witness of him that the Father had sent him. Our Author to support his supposition has crowded his second Chapter with instances, wherein he says, Christ and his Apostles prove several parts of Christianity from the Old

feveral parts of Christianity from the Old

1b. p. s. Testament +. Most of them are not to his purpose. For who ever imagined that St. Matthew intended to prove Mary's being with Child by the Holy Ghost; the Angel's notice of it; Jesus's birth at Bethlehem; his slight into Agypt; his dwelling at Nazareth, &c. from the Old Testament? But to avoid contention: What if every passage of the Old Testament cited in the New was intended as a proof of some part or other of Christianity? will it therefore follow, that all the parts of it were intended to be proved this way; that this was their only, their constant method; and that with Gentiles too, who regarded a Proof

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out of the Old Testament, no more than me do a proof out of the Alcoran? Yes, says be, Sr. Paul's argument in his Epittle to the Galatians is to prove (not some particular part, but) Christianity to the Jews from the Old Testament*; who endeavours to prove, *Ib. p. n. especially in his Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christianity was contain'd in the Old Testament, and was implied in the Jewish History and Law †: I could not pass over these † 1b. p.12.
places without notice; because an ordinary
Reader may observe that the Apostle's principal design in both these Epistles was to prove the direct contrary; not that Christianity was contained in the Old Testament, or the Old Covenant spiritually understood; but that the Old Covenant was to be disannulled, as a Law which could not give life; that it was to be superseded by a new and better Covemant; not according to that which they had lived under. And all this was evidently faid to remove the offence the Jews took at the difcontinuance of their Law, and at the admiffion of Gentile Converts without obliging them to conform thereto. The Apostle's answer was not, These Converts do conform to your Law spiritually understood; but contrarywife; Your Law was impersect, instituted but for a time, which now is and ought to be repealed.

Hence the Reader may begin to judge, what little reason there is to call the Old Testament the Canon of Christians; who are \$16.9.13. called to a New Covenant, quite different from the Covenant establisht by the Old Testament;

which tast is by Christianity expnessly disan-+ Heb. vii. null'd +. And yet by the help of a few mangled 18. passages grossy misinterpreted, and a little Scholastick Reasoning, he has given some colour to # Mat. v. it. Christ Says & Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. The Context would lead a man to interpret this of the moral Law improved and perfected by Christ: but our Author infers from bence, that Jelus and his Apostles are represented, as fulfilling, by their Mission, Doctrines and Works, the predictions of the Prophets, the historical parts of the Old Testament, and the || Ib. p.4. Jewish Law ||. Again Christ Says, All the Prophets and the Law prophefied until 4 Mat. xi. John 4; meaning that the Jewish Dispensation continued in full force, till the Preaching 13. of John Baptist, which is called the Beginning of the Gospel: Yet from this very Text we are told, that the Law is exprelly *Ib.p.5. faid to prophetie of, or typify, Christianity *. How can such an bonest Interpreter want a Text to prove whatever he has a mind to prove! But the Old Testament is said to contain | 1b.p.4. the words of eternal life ||; therefore it must be our Canon. This is a plausible proof, and sounds like the words of our Blessed Lord. But when we take his words entire - What do they prove? - Let the Reader judge. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which # Joh, v. testific of me ##. It is plain be does not give his own, but the Jews opinion of those Scrip-39. tures; urging the obligation they were under from 1.22 TEN EN

from thence to receive him as a Prophet; because those Scriptures, so highly esteemed by them, had prepared them to expect a remarkable Pro-

phet, such as he appeard to be:

The next Witness our Author has recourse to in confirmation of his Canon is St. Paul , * Ib p. 12, according to whom the Old Testament was able to make men wife unto falvation. The Apostle, in the place referred to (2 Tim, iii. 17.) is speaking to Timothy, who had been bred up in the study of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which had led him to the acknowledgment of another more perfect Rule, the faving Grace of God reveal'd by the Gofpel: and for this reason the Scriptures of the Old Testament are faid to bave been able to make him wife unto falvation, not absolutely, not of themselves, but through Faith which is in Christ Jesus. But it feems these latter words are mere expletives, not to our Author's purpole. and therefore ought to have been omitted. For in another place (Acts xxvi. 22.) this same Apofile acknowledges, that he faid none other things to any, than those which the Prophets and Moses did fay - But bere likewife the Apostle has been guilty of the same redundancy, in going on to limit thefe general words to a few particulars, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rife from the dead, and should shew light unto the people and to the Gentiles; for which he flands corrested by our Author + . This excellent Critick + 1b. p. 16. has not only purged St. Paul's writings of fome superfluous expressions, but has likewise restored - 10 L others

[1b. p. 12. others supposed to be loft | As in that passage 2 Cor. iii. 6. which be reads thus . We are Ministers of the New Testament , not of the letter, but of the spirit (of the law.) Without the addition of these words (of the law) the Reader might have imagin'd, that the Apostles taught some new Law or Covenant : But by that Addition the Mistake is prevented, the New Testament does not fignify the New Testament, but the Old Testament spiritually understood; which must therefore be the sole true Canon of Christians.

and explained by our Author, foould not fatisfy every Reader; Jefus and bis Apostles are sum-+ 1b. p. 16: men'd all together +: who do frequently and emphatically stile the Books of the Old Teflament the Scriptures, and refer men to them as their Rule and Canon. And reason good. For 'till the Books of the New Testament were wrote, they were the fole true Canon of Scripture: and it had been abfurd to call any thing by that title, which was not wrote and generally known. But it unluckily bappens that Christians had a Canon distinct from that of the Old Testament, before any one Book of the New Testament was + Acts ii. wrote : for St. Luke fays, + They continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship. However, the this proof be not so full to our Author's purpose, yet it must be allowed to be a keen judicious observation; and that he has given full proof of his dexterity in making a dead Author speak what he

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But left St. Paul's Testimony, thus corrected

Perhaps his Scholastick reasoning will make amends for the defect of his Authorities. To prove that we have no Canon but the Old Testament, he observes *, That our Saviour * 1b. 2. 15. left nothing in writing to establish his New Law, if it may be so called, which was not properly a New Law, but Judaiim explain'd. We will not dispute at present, whether it was a new one, or an old one explain'd. For tho' it was a new one, it ought to be no part of our Canon, if he had not divine Authority to confirm it : But if he bad, it ought to be part of our Canon, tho' it was only an old one explain'd. Our explanatory Statutes being as much part of our Laws, as the statutes they were made to explain. But be it one, or t'other, it seems our Saviour left nothing in writing to establish it. Exall indeed? I am afraid, if he had wrote, and fign'd, and sealed it himself, this strict Geneleman would have infifted upon feeing the Original; and then probably would have raised a thousand scruples about the genuiness of Writings 1700 Years old. Another perfen not quite so scrupulous might think it sufficient, that this new Law or Comment was committed to writing by persons having his imme-diate Commission, to subom he gave his Spirit to be with them always, to guide them into all truth, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatfoever he had faid unto them. But it Jeems they too were deficient. How ! Did they leave nothing in writing ? Tes. It is not deny'd, but the Broks of the New Testament were wrote by these (whom

we call inspired) men. And if I am not miftaken, our Author allows them to be such, in representing the Old Testament, as a Canon • Ib. p. 13, confirm'd by them *. And one would imagine,

* 1b. p. 13, confirm'd by them *. And one would imagine, if their Authority was sufficient to make other Books recommended by them canonical, it made their own so too. But they wrote them

and correct their mistakes about, that Religion, which Christ commissioned and inspired them to teach the world. And what was worse, they did not joyn them together in one Volume, nor was any Collection of Books of Scripture made, whether of Gospels or Epistles.

overfight! whereby Books, which they wrote by divine Authority and Inspiration, became unauthorized and uninspired: the collecting and joyning them together being left to be done long after their times by weak, fallible, factious,

[Ib. p. 17 and interested men ||. For the Reader must observe, that 'tis the Edition, and not the Authority or genius of the writer, which gives value to a Book; as many of our polite Judges of Authors are ready to testisse. The Reader I hope will excuse the manner in which I have treated this part of my Subject: some Answer seem'd necessary, and a serious one improper. But I will not dismiss this Subject without making a few serious Observations.

First, allowing this Author's notion of Christianity to be a true one, that 'tis not properly a new Law, but Judaism explain'd, or the Old Testament spiritually understood; and that the only difference between Jews

and Christians is, that the former are govern'd by the Letter, the latter by the spiritual sense of the Old Testament; yet the New Testament must be strictly speaking the Christian's Rule or Canon. For if it does not oblige him, the Christian, as such, has no Rule to walk by; for there only can that spiritual sense be found. If it does oblige him,

then it is his Rule or Canon.

Again, supposing Christianity to be only the spiritual sense of the Old Testament, it would be impossible, that all the parts of it should be proved thereby, or have their divine Authority from thence. For according to this Author's account, that spiritual sense is so hidden, fecret, and myffical, that it could not have any other foundation than divine discernment *. Consequently, as 'twas ne- * 1b. p. 93. cessary, that the Persons giving this spiritual sense should be guided by Inspira-tion; so also was it necessary, that the Persons receiving it, should have proper Proof of their being inspired. Appealing to the Old Testament in this case could be to no purpose; which would only prove, that the Old Testament contained matters interpreted to a spiritual sense; but could not prove that spiritual fense to be by divine discernment, which is the point to be proved. According to this representation therefore, it is so far from being true, that the truth of Christianity ought to depend upon ancient Revelations contained in the Old Testament, and be proved thereby; that 'tis absolutely necessary it should be proved Some other way.

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But further, we utterly deny this representation of Christianity to be a true one. It is properly and strictly speaking a New Law, superseding and taking place of the Law or Govenant establish by the Old Testament, repeating Laws, which the Jews were obliged to observe, and establishing new ones not required under their Covenant: the obligations of

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*Gal. 4. 3. these two Covenants are as different *, as the obligations incumbent on children are from those of grown persons; and the Oeconomy as diffe-

+Gal. 3.19 rent +, as that of a wife Magistrate in times of raging pestilence, from that he would ase in time of publick health. I will not enter here upon the proof of this account of Christianity, but refer the Reader to the Fifth Sermon, which treats on this Subject:

And proceed to consider, bow Christianity, as a new Law or Revelation, is proved to be of Divine Institution. This is the subject and design of the following Sermons. But it may be proper here to observe, by what arts and subtilties, our Author bas attempted to seduce bis Reader's judgment, telling bim, That the grand fundamental Article of Christianity was, that Jesus was the Messiah of the Jesus predicted in the Old Testament t, which could not appear and be proved but from the Old Testament; that the truth of Christianity depends, as it ought, on ancient Revelations contained in the Old Testament; that Jelus and his Apostles ground Christianity on Proofs from thence, which should feem destitute of other, or external arguments. In all

which there is not one word of truth. For the

Fundamental.

‡ Ib. p. 12

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Fundamental Article of Christianity is, That !! Jesus was a Prophet, a Teacher come from God, speaking the words of God, to whom God had given his Spirit without measure: That his Apostles, who were commission'd by him to publish his Doctrine to the averld, were affifted by the Spirit of God leading them into all truth, and bringing all things to their remembrance, that Christ had faid unto them. This is the true formdation of Christianity, upon which we receive and acknowledge the Dostrines thereof to be of Divine Institution. And there is no man can deny, let him be Jew or Gentile, Deift or Freethinker, the validity of it. If this Article can be establisht upon national principles. the consequence is clear and indisputable, That the Doctrine taught by fuch Perfons was of God, and ought to be submitted to. This foundation is of it felf sufficient to support every other Article of Christianity, mithout any special Proof drawn from a preceding Rewelation to confirm it. Will the foundation proposed by our Author do the business so offer anally? No. For suppose it never so plainly proved, That Jefus was the Melliab predicked in the Old Testament, it could aff none but Jews, who believed the Old Tellament to be a Divine Revelation, and therefore sould not consistently reject a Prophet justified thereby. But what influence could it base upon a Gentile, not asknowledging those Scriptures to be of God ? This Author Supposes it could have mone at all and therefore tells · leppe

. Ib. p. 95 you *, that a Gentile ought regularly to be converted to Judaism, in order to be made a Christian. But bow shall be be converted to Judaism? Must be look further back for another preceding Revelation? Yes, and backwards fill; till be is either loft among the dark uncertain records of Antiquity; or finds out a Revelation, which has some absolute, and not this relative Proof taken from a preceding Revelation to Support it. So that this method of building one Revelation upon another, will in the end be found useless, and some other more essential Proof necessary, to convince a rational Inquirer: whose reason I am perswaded would lead him a shorter and a furer way to truth, than this new Method, which the further it is prosecuted, grows step by step more precarious.

When a man is come at some certainty about a Revolution, it may be proper to call in that Revolution to the assistance of his Reason in his further inquiries. But when the Proof of Revelation is the subject of his inquiry, a wife man will not much regard, what Proof a Turk, or a Jew, or a Christian, as such, are apt to take up with and depend upon; or how the opinions of one Sect are supported by those of another; but will impartially consult his reason, what Rules are most proper to be observed in judging of Revelations pretended to

be of God.

I have endeavoured therefore in my first Sermon to discover, what Rules natural Reason unassisted by Revelation would direct us to observe serve in examining Doctrines pretended to be of God.

The second and third Sermons are to shew, that Christianity is justified by those Rules; that it has such Proof, as impartial reason would incline us to approve; and that this Proof is much insisted on by Christ and his Apostles.

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In the fourth Sermon, I have endeavour'd to vindicate this Proof from the objections of our Adversary, and to shew that it cannot be overthrown without supplanting the foundation, upon which every preceding true Revelation

must be ultimately built. But if we consider the circumstances of mankind, when Christianity first appeared in the World, we may observe that the first Teachers of it had another part to act, besides offering the direct and rational Proofs confirming its Divine Authority. They had the pre-conceived prejudices of men bred up in, and very tenacious of, other religious Institutions to struggle with. To engage them to quit the Old and embrace a New Institution, it was necessary to convince them, either that the Religion they were bred up in was an imposture, and ought for that reason to be rejected; which was the method they took with the Gentiles (Acts xiv. 11-18. and Chap. xvii. 22-31.) or elle. that their Religion was alterable, and did admit of a new Dispensation to succeed it. This latter was the part they had to all with Jews; their Revelation being allow'd to be of God. This occasion'd the frequent appeals we meet with in the New to the Old Testament;

not as the foundation of Christianity; but as arguments drawn from thence were most proper to remove the prejudices of the Jews a-

gainst it.

Accordingly I have endeavoured in my fifth Sermon by Proofs taken out of the Old Teftament to shew, that the Jewish Dispensation was alterable and intended to be alter'd. Which may serve to shew the error of those Jews, who (as our Author says*) had not the least imagination of any alteration of their Divine Law, which they thought was to be eternal.

But besides this general prejudice against the Christian Doctrine, they had conceived particular prejudices against the Person of Christ the Author of it. They could not object, that their Scriptures had not prepared them to expect a great Prophet to some into the world; or that Christ did not bring with him the usual and necessary Credentials of his being such: yet they were offended in him for two reasons; That they did not expect their Messiah (which Jesus pretended to be) to appear in a low and suffering condition; and that they expected a temporal Deliverance from him, Victory and Triumph over the Heathen World. Here again therefore it was proper to have recourse to the Old Testament to remove these prejudices.

Accordingly in my fixth Sermon I bave proved, that their great Prophet was to suffer, and by his Sufferings to procure a spiritual Deliverance for them; and that our bieffed Lord suffered in the very manner foretold in the Old Testament.

* Ib.p. 34

In the Last Sermon I have proved from the same Scriptures, that the Mcssiah was not to subdue by violence the Heathen World, but was to be in an especial manner a Blessing to them; thro' whom they were to be enlighten'd, converted from idolatry, received into Covenant with God; to which Covenant they were to conform with the greatest freedom and willingness, and not be driven to it by force or compulsion: Which predictions, I have observed likewise, were accomplish thro'

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This being done, I think a further Defence of Christianity from the Old Testament needless. For why are the Scriptures of the Old Testament appealed to in the Christian Cause? Did Christ want any rational or usual Proof of his Commission? Did be want such Proof, as bad been prescribed for the tryal of Prophets? or such, as had been given to any of the preceding Jewish Prophets? None of these. Why then were the Jews offended in him? Because of certain prejudices against bim, pretended to be taken from the Old Testament. What more then was needful to be done, than to shew that those prejudices had no just foun-dation in the Old Testament, from whence they were pretended to be taken? The prejudices we have discover'd; we have appealed to the Old Testament thereupon; and can with satisfaction observe, that those very parts of Christ's Character and Conduct, with which the Jews were offended, instead of clashing with, are directly justified by the Old Testament. If this be done in a rational cona.4 Tion vincing white

vincing way, we hope the impartial Reader will allow, that Christianity (so far as it needed any Proof from the Old Testament) is effectually justified thereby. And we think it is so done: because the passages, we appeal to in determining these contested points, are direct and full to the purpose; are taken in a sense that is natural, easy and obvious; in a sense agreeable to the context; in that one sense, which is to be found out by a critical examination of the words; and in a sense so first and necessary, that 'tis not possible to find out any other Person or Event (besides Jesus and the matters relating to him) to which they may be adapted without the greatest violence to the text.

When I say this, I am not insensible what a shrewd Adversary I have against me; who instead of allowing what I have afferted, fays, Proofs taken out of the Old, and urged in the New Testament, being not to be found in the Old, or not urg'd in the New according to their literal and obvious fense, are therefore not Proofs according to scholaftick Rules. Tet the Authors of the Books of the New Testament always argue absolutely from the quotations they make out of the Old Testament, with Gentiles as well as Jews: To both whom therefore they reason'd allegorically. Nay all other methods of arguing were wholly discarded, and the allegorical reasoning set up by them (the Apostles) as the true and only reasoning proper to bring all men to the Faith

Faith of Christ. This is the finishing stroke! and it is doing the business throughly! It is not like your petty scriblers, who are con-tinually catching at some little colourable pre-tence to expose Christianity! It is an attack by storm, which makes the very foundations of Christianity shake! And why should be mince the matter? if a falsbood must be utter'd, why not a bold one? why not as many as will do the work effectually? It was not enough to fay, that the Apostles sometimes used ty-pical or allegorical Proofs in their reasonings from the Old Testament; but that their reasoning from thence was always of this kind. It was not enough to say, that they always argued thus with Jews, who were accustomed to that way of reafoning; but that to Gentiles as well as Jews they reason'd allegorically. It was not enough to say, that they mixt this sort of rea-soning with other arguments urged in defence of Christianity; but that they disclaim'd all other methods of arguing, and fet up allegorical reasoning, as the true and only reaforing proper to bring all men to the Faith of Christ. To whom does be fay this? to any one that has ever read the New Teflament? or is it not rather to persons determined never to read it, but to believe every thing that without a grain of reason or modefly shall be said against it?

If there could be but one instance produced out of the New Testament, where an Apostle arguing with unbelievers did use some other Proof, besides the allegorical, it would suffice

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suffice to disprove this bold Assertion, That the Apostles discarded all other methods of reafoning, and fet up allegorical reasoning, as the true and only reasoning proper to bring all men to the Faith of Christ: And yet 'tis notoriously true, that in every instance, where Christ or his Apostles argue with Unbelievers, whether Jews or Gentiles, they constantly have recourse to other arguments; so far were they from building their dostrine upon allegorical reasoning only. So far from discarding all other methods of reasoning, that other methods of reasoning are constantly used; and sometimes without so much as a single Proof out of the Old Testament join'd therewith. But to give a more distinct answer to this false account of the reasoning used by Christ and his Apostles with Unbelievers; I undertake to prove, much

That they never reason'd from the Scriptures of the Old Testament at all with the Gen-

tiles disbelieving those Scriptures.

That with Jews believing those Scriptures, they always insisted on other Proofs besides those taken from the Old Testament.

That the Proofs taken out of the Old Teflament are not all typical or allegorical,

That our Author has not produced one inflance of a typical or allegorical Proof, used at any time by Christ or his Apostles with Unbelievers. More than this I think need not be done to prove, that his account of the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity is entirely false and groundless.

s. I observe that the Apostles never reafoned from the Old Testament at all with Gen-

Gentiles who disbelieved it. If they bad, it would not follow that they reasoned with them allegorically; because all Proofs taken from thence are not allegorical. He observes indeed very justly * that the Authors of the 16. p. 81. New Testament design'd their books for the use of all men, for Gentiles as well as Jews. From whence he infers as unjuftly, to both whom therefore they reasoned allegorically in those books. Any other man but bimfelf would have concluded, that, as the Apostles designed their books for the use all men: as a Proof taken out of the Old Testament could not affect a Genrile disbelieving it; therefore they offered other Proofs for the con-viction of Generics, and not altegorical Proofs taken out of the Old Testament. However he is obstinately bent to support his own conclusion at any rate. He therefore tells you that alle- + 1b.p. 81. gorical reasoning was pertinent only to a very few Jews; that the Sadducees a numerous sect opposed it; that the Pharifees in great measure quirted it, when Christianity prevailed. But on the other hand ||, Allegory || 1b. p. 83, was much in use among the Pagans; their &c. Philosophers, their Poets, all gave into it: from then the Jews learnt it to who knew \$16.9.90. nothing of the allegorical method, 'till long after the captivity, when they became Hel-Hitherto Gentiles are the real Allegorifts, and Jews such only by infection. Go a little further, and the tables are turned. As if the Jews were the only Allegorists, and Gen-tiles knew nothing of the matter, he tells you*, be p.92.

Gentiles were to become Allegorists or mystical Jews; were to be wholly beat out of the literal way of arguing, and to argue as + 1b. p. 94. became Jews +, that is allegorically; and not + 1b. p. 95. 'till then + were they in equal condition with Jews to be converted by type and allegory. What a scholastick argument is bere! Dilemma with a witness! For whether Jews or Gentiles were allegorists, whether both or neither, every way his scheme must stand upon this invincible foundation, a knot of Contradictions. And there let it stand. For it does not much concern us, whence allegory bad its rise, who learnt it first, or who loved it most; Jews or Gentiles: let bim take one fide or t'other, or both, it makes no difference with respect to the New Testament, or the reasoning contained therein.

I shall therefore proceed to consider the instances produced by him to prove, that particular Apostles did, in their sermons and discourses made express to Gentiles disbelieving the Old made express to Gentiles disbelieving the Old II. P. 80. Testament, reason with them from thence II.

And the Reader may well think he was hard fet to find instances to his purpose, when the Defence which St. Paul made for himself as a criminal, against the accusations of the Jews, hefore Felix (Acts xxiv.) and before Agrippa (Acts xxvi.) are reckoned two of the Sermons,

before Felix (Acts xxiv.) and before Agrippa (Acts xxvi.) are reckoned two of the Sermons, wherein he reasons with Gentiles out of the Old Testament. The nature of the accusation brought against him made it necessary for him to appeal to the Old Testament in his defence: he appealed thereto, to wipe off the crime the Jews had charged him with, not to make

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Converts of the Gentiles, who were his Heavers.

Another instance given of the Apostle's reafoning with Gentiles from the Old Testament is St. Paul's Difcourfe (Ads xin. 14, &c.) in the Synagogue at Antioch, to the men of Ifrael, ver. 16. Children of the flock of Abraham, ver. 26. to whom it was necessary that the word of God should have been first spoken, ver. 46. To whom then was this discourse directed? He says, p. 8. to the Jews in the Synagogue at Antioch. But to ferve a turn, in despieht of naked truth and self-conviction, be calls it, p. 80. a Discourse made expresty to Gentiles.

He appeals further to the case of St. Luke, who (he fays *) in his Gospel and Acts re- 18 , 96. presents the Grounds of Christianity, and argues for it in the same typical manner, from the Old Testament, with St. Paul and the other Apolities, who were originally Yews: in which two Books he may not untruly be supposed to declare the Grounds of his own conviction, and to represent those Grounds to other Gentiles, as sufficient for their conviction alfo. The answer to this is very easy. St. Luke's bufiness was that of an Historian, to give an account of the Attions and Discourses of Christ and his Apostles in the course of their ministry. In his Books therefore the Reader must expect to find the reasoning of Christ and his Apostles with Jews as well as Gentiles. And if the Evangelift had taken notice of no other Converts made, but by reasoning from the Old Testaiophers. ment;

ment, if he had represented the Apostles arguing with Gentiles and Jews promisenously from thence; then this case of St. Luke had been to our Author's purpose. But as the contrary is notoriously true, that be takes notice of other methods of conviction used by Christ and his Apostles, besides arguments drawn from the Old Testament, of Converts frequently made by these methods only s as in the relation he gives of Discourses made to Gentiles only, there is not one citation from, nor any mention made of the Old Testament, the case of St. Luke, instead of answering his purpose, is directly abe calls it. o. 80. a List Aniag

His last, bis only refuge is the preaching of St. Peter to Cornelius, Acts x. 34 - 43. 1 Jb. p. 96. which (be fays +) puts the matter past difpute. No. Cornelius, the an alien and uncircumcifed was a Profelytes worshipped the God of Uracl, believed the Scriptures of the Old Testament , to whom therefore a Proof out of the Old Testament was as proper and as conclusive as to a Jew. It could not be fo do unprafelyted Gentiles, disbelieving those Scriptures , therefore to fush the Apostles never argued from thence. See Acts xiv. 11 1-18. and Chap XVII, 22 - 31. Ass Trees did et

I must in this place take votice of another strange fort of argument alledged to prove, that the Aposties did argue with Gentiles from the Old Testament, and that allegonically. " 1b. p. 92. He fays . The Apostle Paul in his first Epittle to the Corintbians, first and foodid Chapters (wherein it is to be observed, that he argues against the Greeks and the Philofophers.

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lophers, as well as the Jews) feems to difclaim ell other methods of arguing besides the allegorical. This notion is founded upon a supposition, that by the wisdom of God, the hidden wildom which God ordain'd before the world, and the like expressions, sis means the feeret spiritual sense of Judaism, that this wisdom is set in opposition to the common rules of wisdom or Philosophy or disputings called by the Apostle, man's wisdom, the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of the age. But if be bad been disposed to search for the Apostle's meaning by a critical examination of his words, he would have found that by man's wisdom, worldly wisdom, &c. is meant such a gross sense of things, as is affected only with carnal or worldly motives, by which therefore the Dottrine of the Grofs was accounted foolishmess, Chap. i. 18. an therefore not many wife men after the flesh (who mind earthly and sensual things) were called, or inclined to embrace it, ver. 26, 27. Therefore be fays, Chap. ii. 4. My Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing words of man's wildom; be could not propose avorldly or carnal motives to engage their affestions; but endeavoured to convince them by the miraculous powers of the Haly Choft communicated to bim, which he cally demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Hereon the Faith of Obristians was founded, ver ; not in the wildom of men, but the power of God. He goes on to shew, that as the arguments, so the motives of the Go/pel were not carnal, but such as, Eye hath not seen,

nor ear heard, ver. 9. the discovery whereof is opposed to the wisdom of this world and of the Princes of this world, ver. 6. and is therefore called the hidden wifdom ordain'd before the world, ver. 7. which none of the Princes of this world knew, ver. 8. but was revealed by the Spirit, ver. 10. These are the things of the spirit, which the natural man (Yuxixos avecumes the fenfual man) perceiveth not, ver. 13. In this bad sense is the word used, lai iii. 17! Jud. 19: and thus is it explained by the Apostle in the next Chap. ver. 1. & 3. where be substitutes in the room of it adexinos carnal, the effects whereof are envy, ftrife, divisions, the known effects of a carnal worldly temper. It is plain therefore that by the natural man the Apostle did not mean one, who examined and judged of things by the rules of true wisdom or philosophy; but one, who re-garded only the interests and gratifications of a mere animal life. This latter perhaps may be our Author's notion of true philosophy: for be, that reckons a temporal deliverance the only real one, may well be supposed to place true phito joby in a strict care for the things of the body. This bowever, he it true or false wisdom, we allow is confused by the Apostle; to which he prefers, not allegorical reasoning, but that spiritual wisdom, which can abstract it felf from the consideration of things present and fensible, and has regard to those future good things, which God hath prepared for them that love him. And the event of preaching the Gospel has been suited to matters consider'd in this view and light. nest sent than the For

For we know that the wise (according to the flesh, who counted the Dostrine of the Cross foolishness) did not receive the Gospel at first, which plainly arose from their using maxims of reasoning wholly opposite to those of Christians: out of all which maxims they have not yet been beaten by the spiritual reasoners, tho' they are brought into the Gospel. For the very same maxims of worldly interest, which kept them out at the beginning of the Gospel, have now brought these wise men according to the slesh into it, since the sunshine of worldly prosperity has dawn'd upon the Christian Church.

You fee what poor shifts our Author bas been driven to, that he might give some colour to his allegorical scheme; how ready he bas been to catch at the found of words only, if they do but seem to found to his purpose; how be has not scrupled to make an instance, at the expence of self-contradiction, of the Apostles reasoning with Gentiles from the Old Testament. Tet all will not do: For allowing that the Apostles did reason with the Gentiles from the Old Testament, it will not follow that they reason'd with them allegorically from thence; allowing that they did reason allegorically with them from thence, it will not follow that they fet it up, as the only reasoning proper to bring them to the Faith of Christ. But they did not argue with them at all from that topick; they did not so much as name the Old Testament to Gentiles disbelieving it; much less did they reason allegerically with them from thence.

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2. Even with Jews believing those Scriptures they always infifted on other Proofs, besides those taken from the Old Testament: It is natural to suppose that Christ and his Apostles, in the disputes they had with Jews, Thould have occasion to appeal to the Old Testament. When the Jews started objections from thence, it was proper they should be answer'd in that way: when they pretended a regard to those Scriptures as a reason for rejecting Christ, it was proper to show them that those Scriptures, instead of excusing, rather aggravated their unbelief. But this was not the only way of reasoning with Jews: other kinds of Proof were infifted on, and more infifted on for their conviction, than Proofs taken out of the Old Testament. It was very customary with our Saviour, when the Jews disputed bis Mission, to appeal to the miracles be bad done among them; and if they asked a further sign, to refer them to the future miracle of his Resurrection, as the greatest and most convincing Proof they were to expect. I will give a few instances to shew the stress he laid on this sort of Proof in his reasoning with them.

When the Jews lookt upon him, as a Blafphemer rather than a Prophet, for pretending
to forgive fins; what method did he take to
convince them? That ye may know that the
fon of man hath power on earth to forgive fins (he faid unto the fick of the
palfie) I fay unto thee, Arife, and take up
thy couch, and go into thine house. And

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immediately he role up before them. Luke V. 24. When certain of the Scribes and Pharifees infifted on further Proof to confirm his Authority, he told them the utmost Proof that should be given them, was the miracle of his Resurrection. An evil and adulterous generation feeketh after a fign, and there shall no fign be given to it, but the fign of the Prophet Jones. For as Jones was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; forhall the fon of man be three days and three mights in the heart of the earth.
Matt. xii. 39, 40. I would not have the Reader be deceived by our Author, who sugfented as a typical Prophecy of Christ's Refarrection; and that the Proof bere surged consists in the completion of that Prophecy. For the plain reason, why our Lord represents his Resurrection in this comparative light. was to shew the inexcusableness of them who should reject bim, when justified thereby. The Jews allowed Jonas's Mission to the Ninevites to bane been fufficiently justify'd by his deliwerance; and they could not think the Resimxection of a person, three days after be had been put to death as an impostor, a less conwincing Proof; therefore it would be inencu-Sable in them to reject it, as Christ tells them in the next verse. The men of Nineweb shall rife in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jones, and be hold a greater than Jonas is here. The therefore is reprofented as a miraculous Interposition b 2 Apofles

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position of Providence, which ought of it self to convince the Jews, that the Person so ju-

fified was a true Prophet.

St. John, who gives the most particular account of the contests between Christ and the Tews about his Mission, generally represents him appealing to his Miracles in his justification, not as works foretold to be done by the Meffiah, but as works, which bore witness of him that the Father had sent him. There is one instance which deserves particular notice. John x. 24, &c. The Evangelist tells ns, the Jews came to Jesus, and faid, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. What way does Christ take to fatisfy them? He answers, ver 25. The Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear witness of mc. They being offended with him for calling God his Father, he replies again, ver. 27. 18. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me nor: But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him. In this whole Discoursethere is no Proof offer'd from the Old Testament; his Miracles only are infifted on, and they, as sufficient Proof that he was the Christ. And this reasoning prevailed with many, as we read ver. 41, 42. Many reforted unto him, and faid, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there. I need offer no more inflances to prove, that Christ and be martifed Apostles

Apostles in their reasoning with Jews, did not argue from the Old Testament only; much less did they set up allegorical reasoning, as the only reasoning proper to bring even Jews to the Faith of Christ. Besides had they argued with Jews from the Old Testament only, it would not follow that allegorical reasoning was the only reasoning used with

them; because

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3. The Proofs taken out of the Old Teftament and urged in the New are not all typical or allegorical. I think this proposition fully proved in the three last Sermons. Wherein I have particularly confider'd the points contested by the Jews, the prejudices they pretended to have taken to Christ from the Old Tostament, and observed that the passages appealed to by Christ and his Apostles, to remove those prejudices, were strictly applicable to the purpose, not in a secondary, or typical, or mystical, or allegorical, or enigmatical sense, or in a sense different from the obvious and literal sense which they bear in the Old Testament. Our Author, who afferts the contrary, though he found occasion to mention the particular prejudices of the Jews; yet, for reasons best known to himself, never thought fit to take the least notice of the Prophesies cited by Christ and his Apostles to remove those prejudices, or to prove the application of them to be typical. One would have thought thefe, rather than any other, ought to have been particularly consider'd by him; because they are of greatest consequence in the debate: Neverthelefs he has totally declined the work; chufing a much easter way to possess his unwary Reader with a notion, that they also are typically ap-

plied is this regularia

There is a fort of Argument, which Logicians call Induction; whereby you prove a goseral Proposition to be true, by proving, that what is afforted therein is true of every particular comain'd under it. The application of this Rule proves very tedious, when the particulars, contain'd under the general Proposition to be proved, are numerous. For without a special enumeration of every particular, the Argument will not be perfectly conclusive; be-cause what is true of some, or of a great many particulars, may not be true of all: therefore the more desective the enumeration is, the more uncertain will the conclusion be. Tet this fort of argument may sometimes be applied with a great deal of probability, without such a special enumeration, if the Induction con sets of the most questionable particulars: For if what you affert in your general proposition be found true of those particulars, which feem'd most to contradict it; then 'twill very probably be true of the reft, which have not been much comeficil. This is the fort of Argument afed by our Author. His general proposition to be proved is, That the Proofs taken out of the Old Testament and orged in the New are all typical or allegorical Proofs. In bis Induction be bas not indeed enumerated every particular Proof infifted on from the Old Testament. This had been tedious and may be excused; if he has been careful to collect such Proofs, as seem'd to have a more than ordinary

ordinary stress laid upon them; such as were alledged to determine points in contest; Juch as seem'd most to clash with and contradict his typical Scheme; I say, if his Induction confifts of such as these, and these are proved to be typically or myfically applied; then we allow, that it might with a good deal of Prebability be concluded, that all are such. Instead of this he has given us fiveinstances of passages of the Old Testament referred to in the New; which, supposing them never so strictly and literally applied, could add little or no weight to the Christian Cause; no contested point depended thereupon; they were never urged by Christ or his Apostles for the conviction of unbelievers: and from these few instances, so immaterial at least, if not entirely foreign to his purpose, be infers that all Proofs, taken out of the Old and urged in the New Testament, are thus typically applied; and that Christ and his Apostles never argued, but in this typical manner. If this he arguing according to Scholastick Rule, what is there o man may not prove or disprove thereby?

He says indeed, that he has particularly consider'd all other Prophesies cited, and finds them all alledged in a secondary or typical sense: But I cannot help thinking, that in this affertion he has wilfully imposed upon his Reader. For had this heen his opinion of all Prophesies, common sense would have directed him, to insist particularly upon such as seem'd most literal, most contrary to his own scheme; that having proved these to be typical, he might have argued a fortiori that the rest are

thing like it. His Argument by Induction therefore, after all possible allowances made, is altogether inconclusive; the Prophesies we appeal to, as strictly applicable to the purposes of Christianity remain uncontested, in direct contradiction to his hypothesis, That Proofs taken out of the Old and urged in the New Testament are typical or allegorical Proofs. I will now proceed to a particular consideration of those sew instances he has offer'd in defence of his typical scheme. And I hope to prove, that there is not one of them to

bis purpose;

4. That he has not produced one instance of a typical or allegorical Proof used at any time by Christ or his Apostles for the conviction of unbelievers. More than this I think need not be done to prove, that his account of the Grounds and Reasons of Christianity is entirely false and groundless. We do allow, that there are passages of the Old Testament cited and applied to Christ, and matters relating to him, which in their obvious and primary sense had respect to other matters; and that the Evangelists take notice in the course of their History, how several Sayings of the Old Testament, spoken in the Persons of other men, and having reference to other events, were likewise fulfilled or verified through Christ. And if they had done this upon no other motive, than that current notion of the Jews, that several events were fo order'd, and fo fpoken of under the Old Testament, as to prefigure and bear fome

fome analogy to other events, which should come to pass in the Messiah's days, they could not be said to have afted impertinently: provided, they laid no stress upon such applications for the conviction of unbelievers. This is the matter in question; not whether there are any typical applications; but whether such typical applications are insisted on, as convincing Proofs in confirmation of Christianity. To determine this point it may be proper to consider every Instance alledged by our Author to support his side of the Question.

Inft. 1. St. Matthew, giving an account of the conception of the Virgin Mary, and of the birth of Jesus, observes, That by this event the faying of Isaiah, vii. 14. was fulfilled, Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. Upon which our Author fays *, The words as they stand in Ifaiab * lb. p.41 do, in their obvious and literal fense, relate to a young woman in the days of Abaz King of Julab. And does the Evangelift say the contrary? He does not say that the Prophefy related only to Christ, or that it was fulfilled in him only; nor does he apply more of it to him, than was strictly and literally fulfilled in him. What has be done then, which cannot be justified ? Our Author Says +, Thus + 16. p. 5. he proves Mary's being with child by the Holy Ghost, &c: Ridiculous! Had the Prophecy related to none but the Messiah, bad it been exprestly faid, the Mcssiah shall be born of a Virgin, it could not have proved this! The Evangelist does not offer to prove the fact

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by the Prophecy; but first attests the fact as an Historian, and then observes how the words of the Prophet were verified thereby. We allow the application is typical; and we allow that if it had been alledged as a Proof to devermine a contested point, the conclusion would have been doubtful: but the case is far otherwife , no body even objected, that Jesus was not the Moffah, because be was born of a Virgin; and consequently it could not need a Proof from the Old Teltament to justify it. Inft. 2. We allow alfo the application of those words of Hoseah, xi. 1. Out of Egypt have I called my Son, to Christ's return out of Egypt, to be typical; we allow that, according to their obvious fense in the Old Testament they relate to a past action; nor does the Evangelist's application of them in any wife contradict this opinion: For it is certainly true not withfranding, that they were fulfilled, liverally fulfilled in Christ. And it is not at all improbable, that God intended the remarkable event befalling the children of Ifrack bis nominal or adopted Son, (suba fled for fafery into Egypt and return a from thence egain) to answer to another event befalling Christ his real Son: And this is the utmest that can be gather'd from the Apolitie's application of that poffage to Christ. But there is no manner of reason to imagine, that be defige dit as a Proof, that Jefus was the Meffiab: for he draws no inference from it, nor did the event, to which it is applied need a Proof from the Old Testament to justify it. If it had been expressy faid.

faid, The Messieh shall slee into Egypt, and return from thence, it would not have proved Jesus to be the Messiah; because an Impostor might have done the same. On the other hand, his having been in Agypt could be no objection against him; consequently to offer a Proof in

vindication of it was needless.

Thefe two instances therefore are not to our Author's purpose: for though the Application in both he typical; yet they are not alledy'd as Proofs. And if any one will give bingleif the trouble to consider how tittle use is made of fuch applications by Christ or his Apostles in their contests with the Jews; and bow all contested points were settled by express and clear Prophecies; be will be fully fatisfied, that the want of Prophecies to their purpose was not the reason of making them, whatever else was. It may help us a little in this case to observe, that both before and under the tegal Dispensation there was always a view bad to one more perfect, in which not only fews but Gentiles also should be included. It was not improbable therefore, that God, besides making many express Revelations concerning it, should also order many preceding events to bear some refemblance thereto, and might cause those events on purpose to be so expressed by his Prophets, as to be literally applicable to the Messiah and marters relating to him, to whom the Scriptures of the Old Testament had a constant view. And this analogy, though it bear no great firefs to be laid upon it, as a Proof that Jesus was the Mcsiah; yet it was proper to be taken notice of,

of, especially to Jews, among whom that opinion had been received long before the coming of our Saviour. And I think a more than probable account may be given, bow they come by such a notion. Sometimes they found a particular stress laid upon circumstances, which without some further view might be reckon'd wholly immaterial. Such was that particular charge given in killing the Paschal Lamb (Ex. xii. 46.) Neither shall ye break a bone thereof. We do not find this circumstance was required or observed upon the first celebration of the Passover, that night the people were delivered out of Ægypt; but, from what appears, was added afterwards, when the observation of the Passover was made perpetual; yet we cannot account for this addition, as significative of any circumstance of their past deliverance. But confider the institution of the Passover, as having a further view to the deliverance of mankind from the bondage of iniquity, when Christ the Lamb of God should be made a sacrifice for our fins, then we can account for that additienal charge, A bone of him shall not be broken. Again, they found their Prophets expressing themselves in terms too great for the event, to which they primarily belong'd, and might therefore well imagine that their words bad a further view: As in the sign given to Ahaz by the Prophet Isaiah, of a speedy deliverance soon after the birth of a child, which the Prophet should have upon an immediate marriage. The birth of this child is spoken of in a manner not strictly applicable to bim: for it

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is putting a very low sense upon the words, to say, that Child was born of a Virgin: and to give him the Title of Emmanuel, who was deliverance, which God intended for them, is a firain too bigh for that occasion. Again, they found a future Prophet or great Person spoken of under the name of one that had gone before; from whence 'twas vational to conclude, that the future Prophet should in some instances refemble the preceding one. Thus Messiah the Prince is by Jeremy, Ezekiel and Hosea called by the name of David †, consequently some + Jer. xxx. things spoken of David might be expected to be 9. Ezek. found true also of Christ; especially such as xxxiv.24. were spoken by David in his own person, and Hos. iii. s. yet were far from being literally true of him. As in the twenty fecond Pfalm, where he complains of sufferings in such terms as these. All they that fee me laugh me to fcorn, they shoot out the lip and shake the Head faying, He trufted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him feeing he delighted in him. I am pour'd out like water, all my Bones are out of joint, my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet, I may tell all my bones, they look and flare upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture. This description exactly agrees with the sufferings of Christ, but

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it does not appear that the sufferings of David were according to it. The application therefore which is made hereof to Christ, is so far from being unreasonable, that it carries a great deal of probability with it. And though no finess be laid upon it, yet it ought to have been raken notice of by the Evangelists, as it serv'd to illustrate and confirm a very probable opi-nion entertain'd by the Jews before our Savi-

our's coming. But to return: Inft. 3. St. Matthew fays of Christ (Chap. ii. 23.) He came and dwelt in a city call d Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which is spoken by the Prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene. This inflance cannot be so our Author's purpose, because there is no Pro-phacy cited: consequently the Evangelist cannot be charged with making a typical appli-cation, much less with using a typical Proof. It may be asked, are not those words, like shall be called a Nazarene, a citation? No, as our Author very well observes, * they do not exprefly occur in any place of the Old Testa-ment. Why then should they be lookt up-on as a citation from whence? Because reference is made to some saying of the Prophets, must therefore what follows be the saying seferred to? No. The Evangelists frequently appeal to the Prophets in general, without citing any passage or Prophecy. Thus Matt. Scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled. Here is a general appeal to the Prophets, yet meither in the preceding nor subsequent words is any Prophecy cited. Instances of this kind

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kind are common. Nor had the paffage wow before us been fo trable to this mifake, if it had been firittly and literally translated, robich I render thus. And coming to, he dwelt in a city called Nazureth, by which means what is faid by the Prophers was fulfilled, on Na agains adoption, because he should be called for in his being called a Place rene. Whence it appears, that the words inken for the Prophety cited, figurely the event whereby some Prophecy (referred to, but not cited) was fulfilled. If it should be asked, nobat Prophecy was fulfilled by this event? I answer, that of Ilainh lilie 3. which frenks of him as one despised and vilified. Nazarene was a name of reproach among the Jowes which they fixt upon Christ from his dwel-ling at Nazareth, and upon his followers ofterwards, whom they called in contempt the fect of the Nazarenes. Here sherefore is no typical application: and if there bad it resuld not be an inflance of a typical Proof, because the Evangelist draws no inference from u, neither could be supposed to do it; because the reproachful name of Nazarene was given to many besides our Lord.

However this inflance is more excusable, than another be has given of the like kind; Ib. p. 93. for which he cites t Gor. xv. 4. where St. Paul says, that Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, but thes no Prophecy. One would think therefore, that this could hardly be made an instance of allegorital reasoning; and yet by this means our Author, with a little of his good management,

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* Ibid.

bas made it the best instance of all. For the Apostle fixing upon no particular Prophecy, left him at liberty to chuse the best he could to his purpose. And allowing him this liberty, we need not doubt his ability to furnish us with allegorical reasoning enough! To palliate it a little, be asks this shrewd question *, What foundation is there for St. Paul's arguing from the Old Testament, that Jesus should rife the third day, but by an allegory of Jonas's being three days and three nights in the whale's belly? Reason enough, without the help of allegory. For if the Scriptures bespeak the fact, without limiting it to any other time, then the performance of it upon the third day is firitly speaking according to those Scriptures. And Christ's rising again the third day may without a figure be faid to be according to those words of Isaiah, hiii. 10, 12. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for fin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath \$ See Serm. poured out his soul unto death \$. After all, vi. p. 182. the Apostle is not arguing with unbelievers, who were to be brought to the Faith of Christ, or with persons that question'd the truth of this particular article; but is speaking to persons, who embraced the Gospel, and believed this article of it; as appears from these words, I declare unto you the Gospel, which you received and wherein you stand;

then mentions some particular articles, and among t

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mong the rest, that Christ rose again the

Inft. 4. Jesus says of John the Baptist (Mat. xi. 14.) This is Elias that was for to come: Wherein he is supposed to refer to these words of Malachi, iv. 7. Behold I will fend you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord*. What is this to his * 1b. p. 47, purpose? His business was to give some instances of Proofs taken out of the Old and urged in the New Testament. But Jesus is so far from urging the Prophecy of Malachi as a Proof, that he considers it as an objection made by the Scribes, that he could not be the Messiah, because Elias was not come in person. To remove this objection, be corrects the common interpretation of the Prophecy, and tells his Disciples upon his own Authority, If we will receive it this is Elias which was for to come. And his Authority is sufficient reason for receiving it: but laying his Authority afide; we are able to justify it, as the most rational interpretation. For the Jews never had an instance of an old Prophet's coming again; but they had frequent instances in the Old Testament, where a fusure Prophet was promised under the name of a preceding one. The Messiah was often promised under the name of David, and yet they never expected David should come again: nor had they any more reason to expect Elias in person. It is usual not only in the Jewish, but in most other languages, to speak of one person under edt i wiere inflances of tvo foul Proofs taken out

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the name of another, whom he refembles. And I am sure 'tis most justifiable in the case before us; where a person was to be spoken of, at that time without a name. But further, would the Prophecy bave been more to the purpose, if it had been faid expreshy, I will fend a man named John, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord? No, nor so much : for an imposter might more eafily have procured a man of that name, than a person of the spirit and temper of Elias, to bave gone before him to prepare his may.

th. P. 48 Inft. 7. Jefus cites this Prophecy of Haiah, vi. 9. By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and he affures us, that it was fulfilled in his time. And fo it certainly was and we do infift that the application was just; the' we should allow, that the Prophecy, according to the literal fense, relates to the obstinate Jews, who lived in the time of Haiah For nothing is more euftomary both in writing and speech, than to apply an aucient character to a prefent set of men, where their conduct agrees thereto. The cavil therefore at best is but a poor one; and what is worse, it has no foundation. For the character is not given to the Jews in Ifaiah's time; but also to their posterity till their utter extirpation. The Prophet asking, ver. 11. Lord, how long? is answer'd, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolated sale to low lead a real

To thefe our Author has thought fit to add two more instances of typical Proofs taken out

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of the Old and urged in the New Testament. Indeed he has modefly declined giving them the function of his own Authority; but he has called in his Vouchers, and their Authority, not their arguments are to convince us! But I um fure be will exense us, as a friend to free debate, from depending upon their Authority only; and give us leave to examine, who ther the Propheries referred to are truly repreferred to antity of time to be well and

First, We cannot agree with his Vouchers in referring the famous Prophecy of Damiel about the weeks to the times of Antichus Epiphones. The expressions taken from thence, as foretelling the deftruction of yes rafalem, cannot confiftently with the Prophery be applied to the bavack made by Amiochas; and confequently cannot be faid to have only in a feeondary fense a respect to the destruction by the Romans. For tis evident, before the destraction spoken of in the Prophecy was to happen, Melfinh the Prince was to come, and to be cut off (Dan. in. 26.) And whether by him, or some other person, an expedient was to be offered, To finish transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlatting righteouthels; ver. 24. Now we are not fatisfied, that these things were in any fense performed before the times of Antiochus. What expedient was offer a before his ravages at Jerulalem, to make an end of fins and to make reconciliation for iniquity? How, or when, or by whom was der Editor C 2

everlasting righteousness introduced? Who was the most holy (the argues arion) to be anointed. Who was Messiah the Prince, that did appear and was cut off, before the people of the Prince (Antiochus) came to destroy the city and sanctuary? These are dissipulties we cannot get over in referring the Prophecy to the times of Antiochus.

Besides, the Outrages of Antiochus cannot be made to answer in point of time to the Prophery. The seventy weeks mention'd by the Prophet cannot be supposed to mean Weeks of days; because such a compass will be too unreasonably short for the purposes of the Prophecy; no one ever imagined fuch Weeks were intended; nor will such a computation in any wife serve the purpose of them who refer it to the times of Antiochus. Weeks of Years therefore must be intended; and the computation of the 490 [or seventy Weeks of] years must begin from some decree granted in favour of the Jews and their Restoration; and the Jewish state thus restored was to continue at least till the expiration of the 490 years, after which the destruction threatned was to bappen: for it is faid, ver, 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city. But to make all possible allowances in favour of them, who refer the Prophecy to the times of Antiochus; let them take out of the four Decrees to restore Jerusalem, which they please; of the several computations of years then in use, let them follow that which is most to their purpose; let them suppose the de-Aruction à

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firuction threatned was to bappen at, not after, the expiration of the 490 years. All will not do; their account notwithstanding will run almost a fourth part too fast for the Prophecy. The first Decree and shortest years are most to their purpose. But from the first Decree granted by Cyrus, to the end of the Outrages committed by Antiochus, were at most but 379 lunar, or shortest years. So that after all possible allowance made, there is a deficiency of 111 years in their account, who refer the Prophecy to the times of Antiochus. Therefore the expressions taken from thence, as foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem. cannot be applied to any thing done in the time of Antiochus; and upon that account cannot be faid to have only in a fecondary fense a respect to the destruction by the Romans.

On the other hand, within 490 [or seventy weeks of] years, from that most remarkable and most effectual Decree granted to Ezra, to restore Jerusalem, an expedient was offered to finish transgression, to make an end of fins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity; within that time a very extraordinary Prophet appeared, under the character of Messiah, anointed by the Holy Ghost, to bring in everlasting righteousness; and exactly at the end of that term of 490 years be was out off, according to the Prophecy, ver. 26, 27. And soon after, even before that generation paffed away, which was accessary to his death, the people of the Prince (to whom the Jews were then subject) came to destroy the City

City and the Sanctuary; who like a devouring food made a full end thereof, nor was the war determined but with utter desolation. Then, and not till then, was the Prophecy fulfilled; nor will the expressions taken from thence by Christ, and urged by him as foretelling the destruction of Terufalem by the Romans, bear any other application. The Reader, who defires a more particular account of this Prophecy and its completion, may read Dean Prideaux's Connection (Vol. I. p. 160-206) with a great deal of satisfaction.

Another Proof taken out of the Old and urged in the New Testament, which our Authat endeavours under the shelter of other names to represent as unfit for the purpose, is Deut, xviii. 18, 19. Where God fays to Mofes, I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that who loever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name I will "Ib. p. 49. require it of him. Upon which he fays ", That famous passage in the Pentateuch which Luke in two places refers to as spoken of Jefus Christ, is generally understood to fignify in its immediate fense a promise of a fuccession of Prophets. What he means by the immediate fanle of the Prophecy I know not; unless it be the remote, figurative, allegorical fenfe of it. For the more firict and literal the confiration you put upon it, the

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more unavoidably will it belong to Christ. particular Prophet is spoken of ; he was to be of their brethren, (that it an Ifraclite.) fo far the Prophecy may be applicable to any one of the Prophets under the Jewish Diffensation. But the words which follow contain a very remarkable refirition, Like unto thee, viz. Moses. A very needle/s and a very improper addition, if it were intended only of those Prophets, who should sacceed Moses in an ordinary way. For it was observed by Extra who outlived the latest of them. That there arose not a Prophet in Israel like unto Mofes, whom the Lord knew face to face, it all the figns and the wonders which the Lord fent him to do. They were not like to Moses in this, nor in any other remarkable respect. They had no special Commission, they had no nero Lune, no new institutes of Religion to publish; nor had they usually any extraordinary Credentials of a Divine Commission. Their business in short was, to explain and inculeute the practice of the Law given by Moses. Nor is it supposed, that they were infallibly directed even in this: For it is observed of many of their Prophets, that they erred in vision and stumbled in judgment. It would be very improper therefore to fay that they were like Moses. And yet much more improper would it be to apply to them that additional character. I will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. Which passage plainly supposes an extraordinary Commission to publish, STONEY ? C 4

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as from God immediately, something not before energicular Prophet is baken of a he conslaver

And it feems very plain from the Context, that there was a direct and particular view to the Introduction of some New Dispensation. For Moses baving told the people, that God would raise them up a Prophet like unto him, ver. 15. and calling to mind bow much they were terrified at the bearing the voice of God, and seeing the great fire upon the Mount, when the Law was given; he tells them, that God had regard to what they then defired, laying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me fee this great fire any more: That therefore inflead of using the same terrible method in giving them a new Revelation, He would raise them up a Prophet, put words into his mouth, that he might speak unto them all that should be commanded. Let any one judge, whether fuch a caution could have been needful, if Moses had been speaking only of the manner, in which the Law should afterwards be inculcated by succeeding Prophets. It could never have enter'd into the thoughts of any man to suspect, that God would continue to teach them. the same thing over and over again, in the same terrible manner. But, supposing the Prophet to be speaking with respect to a New Revelation, the caution was plainly necessary Because without it they would have apprebended, that the New One would be introduced, as the Old One bad been before it.

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Thus, whether we consider the Words by themselves, or with relation to the Context, they are strictly and properly applicable to none but an extraordinary Prophet, such as Christ was, by whom a New Revelation should be introduced. But allowing for argument's sake, that they were intended indefinitely of a succession of Prophets, it will notwithstanding appear, that they are justly applicable to Christ, and without the help of figure or allegory afford a solid argument in justification

of him and his Doctrine.

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I bope it will be granted, that in this lati-tude the words are at least as applicable to Christ, as to any one of that succession of Prophets supposed to be meant thereby. For be gave as many, as great, as uncontested outward figns of his being a Prophet, as any one that went before him under that character. He was also indisputably one of their brethren; and if there was any Tribe, out of which a greater Prophet than ordinary was expected, He was of that Tribe alfo. He was like to Moses, not only in birth and office, but likewise in all the remarkable parts of his character. As a Lawgiver, be has greatly improved and perfected the Law given by Moses; and purged it from a great many corrupt glosses and interpretations of the Jews. In his behaviour and conduct, He plainly discover'd as great steadiness and integrity, as great meekness and patience, as much prudence and good temper, as Moles did: Nor can we do his character justice without saying, tadt on of Prophers, and this way Christman

that he far exceeded Moses in these, and every other God-like quality and disposition. What good reason then had the Jews to rejett bim, which did not equally oblige them to reject all that went before bim? Why was Isalah to be recesoed, and Christ refused? What did Elijah or Elisha do, which He did not equal or even exceed? Which of all the preceding Prophets resembled Moles more than He? Which Prophet was better justified, according to the Rule prescribed by Moses (ver. 21, 22.) for distinguishing the true from the falfe Prophet, than He was? Did He not, as Moses required, give them a fign, a most aftonishing sign, such as no Prophet over gave? And was not that fign, unufuel and unlikely as it was to come to pass, completely verified? Did not God also further justify Him according to this Prophecy, in punishing them, who would not bearken to Him, as He faid be would do fuch, as would not bearken to that Prophet, whom he should fend? Did not that generation, which condemned him, fuffer in the must lamentable and unbeard-of manner? And do not their posterity, who still continue to reject been, fill lie under the same Curse? How juftly therefore might the Apostles, in their reasonings with the fews, appeal to thefe words of Moses? Take them in which sense you will. they that reject bim are condemned thereby. Take them in a strict fenfe, as respecting some particular Prophet, and they are applicable to none but Christ. Take them in a latitude of signification, as spoken indefinitely of a succeffion of Prophets, and this way Christ must be

be included; nor can He be excluded, without excluding all the Prophets that went before him, and thereby making the Prophecy

entirely infignificant.

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I hope then I have fet this Prophecy and the reasoning from it in such a light, as not to need the help of figure or allegory to make it applicable to the purpose of Christianity. You fee we can reason from it strictly and according to scholastick Rules, and the argument drawn from thence has as much force, as the Authority of Moles can give it. 3 process)

There is but one instance more alledged by our Author to support his charge, That Jesus and his Apostles grounded Christianity on typical or allegorical Proofs, It is taken from the use which St. Paul makes (Gal. iv. 21, (8c.) of some bistorical facts concerning Abraham's two Sons, Isaac and Ishmael, and be feems transported with the aptness of it to bis purpose. * Is there the least ground from * 1b. p. 93, the literal fense in Genesis, to suppose Abrabam's two Sons, Isaac and Isbmael, signified the Two Covenants? Does not St. Paul himself call such interpretation allegorical? And can fuch a feeret, spiritual meaning of fo plain a piece of history have any other foundation than divine discernment? New bis triumph is over there may be room to ask, what is this Instance to his purpose? He calls it to St. Paul's Argument to prove Christi- + Ib. p. 11. anity to the Jews from the Old Testament. But an ordinary Reader with the least attention may rafily perceives that the Apostle is there had been now her and goes to a neither

neither proving Christianity, nor speaking to Persons, that needed a Proof of it. His Difcourse is plainly directed to Converts, to determine a Question, which had occasioned some difference among them. The Question was, Whether the ceremonial Law continued to oblige men under the Christian Dispenfation. Whatever reasoning therefore the Apofile uses on this Head is not to our Author's purpose; which was to show, not what methods the Apostles used to reconcile differences among Christian, but what methods were taken to make Christians; what arguments they used to establish Christianity, where it was not, and not fuch as were used to remove doubts and fcruples, where it was admitted. Let the Apostle's reasoning therefore in this place be what it will, it will not follow by any means, that this fort of Proof was ever made use of to prove Christianity to the Jews, much lefs, that 'twas fer up as the only proper reasoning to bring all men to the faith of Christ, p. 94. One and and own end

I might therefore justly dismiss the Objection with this Answer. But yet I hope to make it appear, that the Apostle has put no secret mystical meaning upon that plain piece of history, referred to by him in his Epistle to the Galatians; that he argues from the plain sact diself, and not from any hidden meaning supposed to be couched under it. The reasoning, I own, is not very obvious; but a due consideration of the historical sacts, to which it refers, and of some parallel places, where the Apostle

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argues from the Jame Topick, will, (I believe)

The piece of bistory, referred to by St. Paul in this and other Places, is to be met with in the book of Genefis. When God called Abraham to fend bim into a strange land to sojourn there, he made him this promise. I will make of thee agreat Nation, and I will blefs thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a bleffing. And I will blefs them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: And in thee shall all the families of the earth be bleffed, Gen. xii. 2, 3. The promife, you will easily observe, consists of two Parts; the former part relating to his own family, that his descendants should become a great nation; and should be bleffed; the latter part respecting the families of the earth in general, that they should be bleffed in him (that is) in bis feed, as it is explained Gen xxii. 18. In thy feed shall all the nations of the earth be bleffed. If we go on to enquire, upon what confideration this gracious promise was made and confirmed to Abraham; the Historian tells us, Gen. xv. 6. That he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness. In process of time Ishmael was born to Abraham of Agar bis bond-woman, Gen. xvi. 17. and Abraham feem'd to defire no more, but that the Promife of a numerous and mighty iffue might be fulfilled thro' Ishmach, Gen. xvii. 18. O that Isbmael might, live before thee! But God affured him, that his Covenant or Promise, should not depend up. 31 MASS

on Ishmael, but should be fulfilled in Heac, My Covenant will I establish with Isaac, v. 211 In Isaac shall thy seed be called, Gen. axi 122

Thefe are the bistorical fatts referred to And from them we may observe, that the former part of the Promise, more immediately respecting the natural descendants of Abraham, did not so unalienably belong to his feed according to the Flesh, but some might be excluded from the promised blessing, as appears in the case of Ishmael. And therefore much less unalterable must their claim be to the latter part of the Promise, which was made to all without distinction. In thee shall all the families of the earth be bleffed. Upon this observation, which is very obvious, is the Apostle's Argument founded, Rom. ix. 6, &c. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect, because many of the feed of Abraham one excluded. For they are not all Ifrael, which are of Ifraet: Neither because they are the feed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Hoad shall thy feed be called. That is, they which are Children of the Flesh, these are not the Children of God, (they are not reckoned as Children in the fight of God) but the Children of the Promile (or Covenant) are counted for the feed. This be goes on to illustrate from the case of Ishmael, and likewife from that of Efau.

We may observe further, that with regard to the latter part of the Promise, the Israelites (as such) had no peculiar title thereto. The

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Promiso is general, no distinction is made of families, all are equally included, as So. Paul infers from the fame topick, Gal. iii. 28. There is neither Yew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor Free, there is neither Male nor Female; for ye are all one in Christ Jefus, the promifed feedmany salvin la died paisd)

As to the condition or qualification requisite to make a man about partaker of the promised bleffing, we may observe, that faith in God, productive of Ancere obedience, was very probably intended to be the means of obtaining the promise; because it was upon Abraham's faith that the promise was made, and it is enpressly recorded of bim, That he believed in God, who counted it to him for Righteoulnels. After this manner we find St. Paul arguing from this Historical Fact, Rom. iv. 13. For the promile, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his feed through the Law, but through the rightcousness of Faith. Judging it therefore very rational to Suppose, that as Abraham obtained the promife poro' faith, fo mankind fould be made partakers of the blaffing promised, thro' the fame means. For why elfe was it recorded? as the Apollo argues, very 23, 24. It was not written for his fake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed. As if be bad faid, to to was recorded of Abraham's faith, shat "twas imputed to him for righteoufness, that God was ploufed with and accepted it, for our se encouragement to imitate bim therein That BE foods offerwhen

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"nels might be imputed to us also, then give

As to the grand question, Whether circumsifion, and the observance of the Mosaick Land (being both of divine appointment) were not intended to be necessary conditions of obtaining the latter part of the promise made to Abraham? The answer is, That nothing like this appears in History, that therefore the Jewish Converts were to blame in infifting thereupon. Thus we find St. Paul arguing, Rom. iv. 9, 10. We fay, that faith was reckoned unto Abraham for righteourness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in Gircumcifion or in Uncircumcifion? Not in Circumcifion, but in Uncircumcision. As Abraham therefore by faith without Circumcifion pleased God and obtained the promise; it is not improbable, that they also should obtain the blessing promised without Gircumcifion, who walk in the steps of that faith of our Father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcifed, ver 12. And the very same reasoning will hold good with respect to the Mosaick Law, that the observance thereof could not be a necessary condition of obtaining the general bleffing promised. Accordingly we find the Apostle applying it, Gal. iii. 17. This I fay, the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ (the promised seed) the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot difannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. But

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But might not that Law (you'll ask) be made a necessary condition without disannulling the Promise? To which I answer, That the nature of the Law itself will determine this question in the negative. Because it was adapted to the particular circumstances of the Israelites, confidered as a separate People: It was given with design to keep them separate, during the corrupt idolatrous flate of the Gentile world. It was added because of Transgressions (with which the world abounded) till the Seed shall come, to whom the promise was made, Gal. iii. 19. And till then only, is very evident; because the continuance of a Law defigued to keep them separate, under a dispensation intended to unite in one body both Jews and Gentiles, and to make both partakers of one common blessing, is absurd and ridiculous. The very supposition of such a Law, existing in its full force, and to be continued always, would necessarily exclude either Jews or Gentiles from their title to that common bleffing promised equally to both. For it would be abfurd to suppose one necessary condition of a common Covenant to be such, as obliged them to have no Communication with one another. Therefore (as the Apostle argues, Rom. iv. 14.) If they which are of the Law be Heirs, (as such) not only faith is made void, but also the promise is made of none effect : Because the Law, which virtually forbids. Union betwint Jews and Gentiles would exclude the Gentiles from inheriting the bleffing with them. And fo vice stay & verfa,

verfa, If the Gentiles be Heirs; the Jews, continuing still bound by their Laws of Separation, must in consequence thereof be excluded from partaking of the inheritance with the Gentiles. And herein we fee the force of that Reason, which St. Paul gives, why many of the Jews, who waited for the promised Seed, did not obtain the bleffing promised thro' bim; Because they sought it by the works of the Law, Rom. ix 32. Which Law, perfetted in after the promised Seed was come, served rather to exclude them from it. Hereby likewife we understand, why subjection to the Law was reckoned a state of Bondage, Gal. iv. 3, 9. under which the Jews were faid to be kept thut up, Gal. iii. 23. not only as the Law confifted of many burdenfome and (in their own nature) needlefs ordinances, but also, as it detained them, (so long as it continued in force) from inheriting the promifed Bleffing.

Hence it is, that St. Paul, in the disputed passage, Gal. iv. 21, &cc. compares the case of the Jews, persisting in the law, to that of Ishmael. Ishmael could not be beir according to the first part of the promise; because the was the Seed of Abraham, he was so by a bond-woman; and the son of the bond-woman was not to inherit with the son of the free-woman: The Israelites likewise, considered as a people separated by their law from the rest of the world, could not, as such, be partakers of the latter part of the promise, which was intended to unite all men

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in one body, and make them partakers of one common blessing. As in the first case, there was a natural imperfection, by which Ishmacl was excluded: So in the latter, there was a moral one, by which the Jews excluded themselves; for tying themselves up strictly to their laws of separation, they were disqualified to partake of a Covenant, which in its own nature could admit of no separation at all. Whilft the Law therefore was their mother, their case might justly be compared to that of Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, who (as such) had no title to inherit. This led the Apostle, in the passage now before us, to draw a parallel between the one case and the other. Far from Saying, That by Haac and Ishmael, in the book of Moses, were meant the two Covenants; far from Suggesting, that any fecret spiritual meaning was couched under that plain piece of History; be argues (as is usual) from one parallel case to another, and illustrates the case in dispute by its correspondency to a known case, that was out of dispute.

Accordingly the Apostle's meaning may be explained thus: ver. 21. "I presume that you, who defire to be under the Law, are acquainted with it. ver. 22. Confider then what is written concerning Abraham's " two fons, Isaac and Ishmael, one of which he had by a bond-woman, the other by a " free-woman. ver. 23. The one excluded from " inheriting, as fon of a hand-woman; the other, " as son of the free-woman, inheriting by Covenant,

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wenant, or Promise. v. 24. This case is parallel to, and may (by a figure with which men use to express one thing by another) be made to represent the two Covenants: The one from Mount Sinai, viz. The legal Covenant, through which the unbelieving Jews " are fill in a ftate of bondage, by its Laws of Separation fout up, and during their subjection thereto disqualified to inherit the general blesfing. Their case therefore through the Law is like that of Ishmael through Agar. v. 27. The fate then of Agar and her son answereth to the present state of Jerusalem formed upon the legal Covenant, for through it she is in bondage with her children. v. 26. But Jerusalem which is from above, or the new " fate formed upon the fecond Covenant, is free, wherein there is no distinction of families, no laws of separation; but as common parent of us all, takes in all nations, all the families of the earth, as Heirs of one common bleffing. v. 27. Wherefore Isaiah foretelling this glorious increase of the Church " of God, chap. liv. 1, &c. breaks forth, and " fays, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than the which hath " an Husband. ver. 28. We then, Brethren, s and all that embrace it through faith, as " Ifaac was, are Heirs according to promife. ver. 29. But the unbelieving Jews resemble " the excluded fon in all respects; for as then Esau, that was born after the flesh, persedo at This cuted "cuted Jacob, that was born after the spirit: " fo they valuing themselves upon being of the Ged of Abraham according to the flesh, are for maintaining strictly their laws of separation, and would thereby exclude you, to whom the 4 Promise equally belongs; but by that very means they are still in a state of bondage, and 6 exclude themselves. ver. 30. So that what the Scripture says with respect to Ishmael, is justly applicable to them, Cast out the 66 bond-woman and her fon: for the fon of the bond-woman shall not be heir with

" the fon of the free-woman"

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This is the allegory, this is the application. There is no mystical meaning sought for, nor scrued out of the plain words of Moses. The use which the Apostle makes of them in this and other places, needs no other construction, but the literal and obvious one. His design here is to illustrate one case by another parallel to it. And in this be is not fingular, but is justified therein by the common rules of reasoning and discourse, and by the frequent pra-Etice of the most strict philosophical Writers. His argument by example is drawn up more firitly according to scholastick rule, than our Author's by Induction: For he argues a fortiori, if a natural imperfection excluded Ishmael, the of the feed of Abraham according to the flesh, much more may a moral one be Supposed to exclude others of the same seed.

I have now confider'd every Instance alledged by our Author; of which there is not one that can be called a typical or allegorical natu.

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PREFACE

Proof. So entirely groundless is his charge against the Apostles, That they set up Allegorical Reasoning, as the true and only Reasoning proper to bring all men to the faith
of Christ. Having therefore cleared them of
this charge; I shall now leave the Reader to
the consideration of another sort of Reasoning,
which Christ and his Apostles always had recourse to in their desence of Christianity.

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To the Author of the Apology for free Debate.

THether any man of underfinding and bonefty would be glad, shat such men as HOOKER, HALES, CHILLINGWORTH, &c. instead of endeavouring to establish any one important truth, and giving their own mast intimate thoughts thereupon, should have laboured to puzzle every thing of importance that came in their way with the little arts, the quibbles and sophistry of a wrangling disputant? Whether it had been a good use of their learning and penetration (in which they had not many superiors) if instead of speaking their own minds freely on all important questions in Philosophy and Theology, like Mr. Whilton, they had employ'd themselves in making large collections of all the weak unguarded expressions of Philosophers and Divines, publishing them to the world in the most ludicrous manner, with design only to expose those Writers and their Subjects, not to improve their Whether such great Readers thereby? men would mot more virtuously and religiously, as well as more Honorably, bave employ'd their time, if they had turn'd themselves entirely to the heathen Historians, Poets, Orators, and Philosophers, spent ten

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or twelve years upon Horace or Terence than in studying to burlesque the Scriptures, by coining abourd ridiculous interpretations for every passage capable of misconstruction, picking out scraps of sentences, broken unconnected passages, half expressions and putting them together to give the Reader a false idea of Religion, and the Scriptures whereon 'tis founded? Or if they had thus applied their sagacity and labour, whether a just apology for Mr. Whiston, for free debate, for free profession and communication of notions, for teaching others what a Man is perswaded of himself, could be reckon'd an apology for such men and such portance that came in their way segnitive little airs, the quibble and lophishy as



defign only to expole those Winers and their Subjects, and to improve these Renders thereby? Whenever tech great

wranging disputant in his they leded them a good use of algorithms for his configuration with a solution of the configuration of the co

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SERMONI.

Divine Revelations How proved.

In the 4th Chap. of 1 John, at the latter part of the 6th verse, &c.

Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

S the visible defect of human faculties, and the insufficiency of bare natural reason to guide and direct us in matters of religion, may convince us of the

necessity of a divine revelation to give us further light and satisfaction therein: so the many different and contradictory pretences, that have been made to inspiration, and the great diversity of opinions, which have been taught and received in the world, as doctrines coming from God, may convince us SERM. how needful it is, that with the utmost

1. caution and attention we sist and examine such pretences, and, as the Apostle exhorts at the 1st verse of this Chapter,

Try the spirits, whether they be of God.

Some of these pretences we are sure must be salse, so inconsistent are they with one another, that they cannot come from God, who is a God of truth and can in no wise contradict himself.

And as it is of the utmost confequence to us, that we know the will of God, that we embrace and follow it, when revealed and made known to us: so is it of no less importance, that we be not led away by the error of the wicked, or imposed upon by feducing spirits, speaking lies in hypocrify to beguile unstable fouls. It is an enquiry therefore worthy our most ferious application, how we may be fecure. from the wiles and devices of false teachers, who pretend to be of God and are not; how we may distinguish between the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

That the fincere impartial inquirer may attain to a good degree of certainty herein cannot well be doubted; when we confider, that the wifdom and good-

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ness.

ness of God are as much concern'd to SERM. fet some peculiar marks and tokens upon a revelation coming from him, as to grant us any revelation at all. No revelation whatfoever would fignify any thing, or be of any fervice to us, unlefs we could have some certainty about it. A revelation coming from God, unless it could be known to be fuch, is in effect the same as having none at all. To receive it, as fuch, without any indications of its divine original, would not only argue in us a groundless credulity, but also leave us liable to all manner of imposture. What method therefore shall a fincere man take to avoid fuch a mifcarriage? shall he embrace the first religion, that offers it felf to him, and without feeking any further flick close to the principles of his education? If this were fafe, then all the contradictory notions, that are in the world, would be equally fafe and true, and there could be no fuch thing as a false religion, or the fpirit of error any where. But this will not be admitted. Is truth then confin'd to any certain country, or to any particular fet of men? No. But if it were, still there would remain this difficulty, to be affored to what country, or to what fort of men it belong'd.

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SERM. long'd. If this were all the rule we had to go by, every man (no doubt) would be partial to his own country, and to those men he is best acquainted with: And fo the principles of education must prevail every where, instead of true religion. do which too smich wall

There is therefore no possible way left to discover truth from error, but by a fincere impartial use of our reafon: examining, according to the best of our judgment and abilities, the different pretences of men to truth and inspiration, the nature and tendency of the doctrines taught by them; which feem most worthy of God for their author and to have the clearest marks of divine Authority stampt upon them. This is the advice our Apostle has given us, Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God. Hereby plainly diffwading us from credulously receiving any doctrine without examination; and as plainly fupposing, that there is some method of difcerning between doctrines coming from God and those that do not. What that method is, the Apostle has suggested to us in the following verses. For tho' in the 2d and 3d verses he afferts in favour of Christianity, that Every spirit. b'anoi

ENOI How proved . I MINIT rit, which confesseth Jesus Christ to SERM. be come in the flesh, is of God; and er very spirit, that confesseth not that Je-

fus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: yet he does not do this dogmatically, expecting to be believed upon his own bare Authority; but at the 5th and 6th verses proceeds to give his reafons for that affertion. They are of the world (meaning them that denyed Christ and opposed the Christian doctrine) therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them, that is, they are acted by a worldly principle, and their doctrines are calculated to ferve worldly purposes. We are of God, (speaking of himself and the rest of the Apostles:) have no worldly views, no dependance but on God, he that knoweth God heareth us (because our doctrine is worthy of him for its Author) he that is not of God heareth not us (because it is not fuited to worldly senfual minds.) These reasons he thought would justify his affertion in the 2d and 3d verfes; and therefore adds in the words of the text, Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of er-

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SERM. diately apprehended. I shall endea-

flew the meaning of the Apostle in these two verses, which are supposed to contain his reasoning about the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Secondly, I shall draw some observations therefrom, which may serve as Rules to us, whereby we may be able more easily to distinguish between the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. And,

First, I shall endeavour to explain the terms, and fliew the meaning of the Apostle in those two verses which are supposed to contain his reasoning about the spirit of truth and the fririt of error. His rule for the difcovery of impostors is this. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. Who are meant by them, that are of the world, is not difficult to be underflood: they are fuch as regard most the things of this world. What they are, the Apostle tells us Chap. ii. ver. 16. The tust of the sless, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life; which are not of the Father, but of the world. And in the preeeding verse he tells us, he that loveth the world (in these respects, is fond of thefe

thefe things, makes them his chief aim) SER M. the lave of the Father is not in him. The reason is plain and obvious; beeaufe the love of these things, instead of engaging men in the service of God, in endeavours to promote his honour and glory, do on the contrary engage men in purfairs unworthy both of God and themselves. The love of these things is the fource of all iniquity, of all the mischiefs and confusions that are in the world, of every thing that is hateful to God, and debasing to human nature. The Apostle therefore might justly argue, that persons, acted and governed by this principle, were not of God: especially if it appears, as he observes further, that their doctrines also savoured of this principle, were calculated to ferve worldly purposes. They speak (fays he) of the world, and the world beareth them: that is, they fuit their doctrines to the carnal apprehensions of men; therefore earthly and fenfual minds are glad to embrace a doctrine fuited to their vicious tafte, and countenancing their immoral practices. I am fure no fober mind can doubt, where fuch fymptoms as these appear, but there must be imposture at the bottom. And therefore any man pretending

SERM tending to teach a new doctrine by immediate revelation from God, if it appears that he has fome worldly ends to ferve thereby, that his doctrine be calculated to win upon the vitiated part of mankind, to footh and countenance them in their worldly and carnal purposes, may fafely and without hesitation be rejected as an impostor. By this just and rational observation did our Apostle explode the pretences of that impure fect, who fetting themfelves in opposition to the Apostles, pretended to be of God, to bave fellowship with him, to know him more perfectly than other men; yet indulged themselves and followers in all manner of licentiousness; taught that Christ had purchased such a liberty for us; that men might deny him in times of perfecution, and for their prefent fafety conform to the practices not only of Jews, but of Gentiles likewise. How plainly does it appear that these men were of the world, that they spake of the world, and that they who heard them were as worldly-minded as themfelves? me brings and to any 5 But the character of a real prophet,

one that is truly inspired by God, is the reverse of this. We are of God. Let

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me observe here, that this is not a title, SERM which they assumed to themselves without foundation. For at the 10th verse of the preceding chapter, he had given the marks, which distinguish them that are of God, from them who are not. In this (fays he) they are manifest, he that doth not righteousness is not of God. Leaving us to conclude on the other hand, that he who doth righteousness, who makes it the scope and aim of his actions to be upright and without offence, to deal equally by all men, that would not for the gratifying of any private passion, or for the sake of his own worldly interest, do a hard or injurious thing to any, is of God. And his reason for this conclusion is given at the 29th verse of the second chapter; because such men act and behave themselves, as children of God, as persons having the spirit of God abiding in them; because they follow his example, endeavour to be like him, and as be is, fo are they in this world. For God is righteous. And as the Apostle argues, If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him. In short, the principle the Apostle

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SERAL can take in matters of religion. That is, to get as just and true apprehensions as we can of the Divine nature his attributes and perfections, what is worthy of him, what most probably may be pleasing to such a Being; and then to make the best judgment we can of persons pretending to be from him; by comparing their conduct, their doctrines, their defigns, with our apprehensions of that great Being, from whom they pretend to derive their authority. If it appears, that they act worthy of that Master from whom they pretend a commission, in endeavouring to be righteous as he is righteous, copying in all things, as near as human frailty will permit, all his imitable perfections; if they make his glory, and not their own private passions and interests, the scope of their conducts if the doctrine they teach have nothing in it unworthy of God for its Author, nothing that tends to footh and encourage men in their vices, but rather to reform and perfect human nature; if the motives they use to enforce it are not suited to the vitiated tafte of worldly and carnal men, but fuch as are worthy of God to offer, and of wife and just men to be influenced by; if this (I fay) appears; then,

then, not only all suspicion of impo-Serm. Sure is removed, but every one that I hath just and true apprehensions of God will be inclined to give attention to such a doctrine as worthy of him, and most likely to be dictated by him.

It is from this principle, that the Apostle argues in favour of christianity. and the first publishers of it; that it was a doctrine worthy of God, agreeable to just and true apprehensions of him; that therefore they who knew God were ready to embrace it but worldly and fenfual minds, who favour not the things that be of God, did for that very reason neglect and oppose it. Whether the Christian religion will upon examination appear to be worthy of God for its author, and agreeable to just and true apprehensions of him, is a question, which will not fall within the compass of this discourse. My business at present is to enquire, what rules the Apostle has laid down for our direction in judging between the Spirit of trath, and the spirit of error? whether those miles have any good foundation in reason, and may with any fafety be depended upon? And I think no role more fafe or necellary in examining doctrines, whether CHOOVERY they

SER M. they be of God or not, than that prefcribed in this Chapter. Every wife man, I think, would make this his first step in fuch an enquiry. He would confider the doctrine proposed to him, the ends and purposes proposed to be served hereby; he would confider next the Author to whom it is ascribed, whether it be worthy the interpolition of fuch a great and good Being, and likely to proceed from him: If upon enquiry he should find a wife design, a great and good end purfued thereby, a new and more effectual method discover'd for promoting it, which had either escaped the notice, or was above the reach of human capacities; and upon the whole nothing inconfifient with, or unworthy of the wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and other known attributes of Almighty God; nothing that favoured of worldly policy, or that could fuit the purposes of crafty defigning men; if this (I fay) appeared to be the refult of his enquiry, he could have no room to censure it as an imposture, he must at least be inclined to have a very favourable opinion of it, and I think could hardly avoid confessing it to be of God. Having thus explain'd the principle, propos'd by the Apostle, for the discovery

discovery of true from false prophets, SERM.

I shall proceed in the

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Second place to make fome observations thereupon, which may ferve as Rules to us, whereby we may be able more easily to distinguish between the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. And ift I observe, that the Apostle supposes the use of our natural reason necessary to diffinguish a revelation coming from God, from that which does not. The Rule prescribed by him for the tryal of fpirits, whether they be of God or not, is this, That we compare their doctrines with the notions and apprehenfions we have of God. This plainly supposes that we ought to have some just and true apprehensions of the divine nature, before we can be qualified (according to this Rule) to judge of a revelation coming from him. How then are these apprehensions of God to be acquired? Not by revelation, it is plain; because they are prerequisite to the tryal of revelations. The existence of God. and in a good meafure his attributes and perfections, must be understood by us, before we can expect him to reveal himfelf to us, before we can judge, whether the doctrine revealed be worthy of him. In this case therefore natural reason must

fays, He that knoweth God heareth us.

SERM be our guide; what that teaches upon
a ferious impartial enquiry must be depended upon. And till we have, by a
careful application of our natural faculties, acquired some settled apprehensions of God, we are not capable of
applying the Apostle's Rule to any good
effect; who supposes them only that
know God, capable of judging of a
doctrine coming from him, when he

There cannot (I think) be a worse reflection cast upon a religion, pretended to be of God, than to represent it, not as founded in reason, but built upon the ruins of it. It was plainly the opinion of the first teachers of Christianity, that their doctrine had a just foundation in reason; that it contain'd nothing inconfistent with it; but that the whole Christian scheme was agreeble thereto. Therefore we find them often appealing to the reason of mankind in justification of it. Which of you (fays our Bleffed Lord to the Jews) convinceth me of fin? and if I fay the truth, why do ye not then believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words. ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God. (Joh. viii. 46, 47.) As if he had faid, Which of you can bring any

any one argument to prove, that I have SERAE taught any thing unreasonable? and if my doctrine be unexceptionable; if there be nothing in it imworthy of God, to whom I impute it; if there be nothing in it repugnant to unprejudiced reason, to which I appeal; why do you not receive it? He that has just and true apprehensions of God, and is disposed to act fuitably thereto, his judgment and inclination will move him to hear whatever is worthy of him. My doctrine is fuch; and the true reason why you reject it is, because ye neither think, nor act, agreeably to the Divine nature. The Apostles generally suppose, that men were capable by the due use of natural reason (even without the help of revelation) to get in a great measure right and true apprehenflons of God. As St. Paul observes in his epiffle to the Romans, Rom. i. 20. The invisible things of him from the creation of the world might have been clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. And in the Acts, chi xiv. ver. 17. fpeaking of the darkest times of beathenism, he says, that even then God left not himfelf without witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain

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SERM. rain from heaven and fruitful feafons; filling their hearts with food and gladnefs: meaning that from these continual instances of providence exercised towards mankind, they might, by a due use of their natural faculties, have come at some right and true apprehensions concerning him. And indeed it was necessary that men should have made fome progress herein, before they could be capable, with any certainty, to judge of a revelation coming from him. Because by these natural apprehensions of God they ought to have examin'd the doctrine pretended to be revealed, before they could with any fafety conclude, that it was worthy of God for its author, and likely to have proceed-

ed from him.

Since therefore the use of natural reason is necessary truly to distinguish a revelation coming from God, from that which does not, we may observe

Secondly, That any doctrine, which contradicts the evident dictates or deductions of reason, ought not be received as coming from God; but to be rejected as proceeding from a spirit of error. There are certainly some things necessary to be received and depended upon as true, before any such thing

thing as a Revelation can be admitted SERM. As for instance, that there is God, and that he is a Being of never-failing truth and veracity. Till I am fatisfied of both these at least, I have no room to look for, or depend upon, a revelation from him. And the only courfe I can take, antecedently to Revelation, to come at the knowledge of these; is to consult my Reason: and all the certainty I can have about them must be fuch, as my reason is able to furnish me with. If therefore I cannot depend upon the evidence of reason, I cannot depend upon the truth of these two propositions; nor confequently upon the truth of a revelation, which necessarily presupposes the truth of them. way were an noun

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It is plain therefore, that to question the evidence of Reason, is to render Revelation equally questionable; and to receive any thing as a revelation coming from God, which contradicts the evidence of reason, is to undersmine the very foundation of revelation it self, and to leave that groundless, upon which we build the truth of the doctrine revealed. No doctrine theresfore, which contradicts the evidence of Reason, can upon any tolerable grounds

SERM grounds be admitted, as a Revelation

Which will appear yet further by confidering, that the very supposition of fuch a Revelation is utterly groundless. We are very well affured, that God is the author of our beings, and all our faculties: and we cannot but acknowledge, that our understanding is the most excellent faculty he has given us. It is in that we excel the beafts that perish; and it was plainly given us with this intent, that by a due use and application thereof we might discern truth from error, that which is just and fit to be done, or observed by us, from that which is not. This therefore must be lookt upon as one way, which God has taken to discover his will to us. Should we therefore admit any thing as a Revelation coming from him, which contradicts the evident dictates of our reason, we sacrifice one revelation, that which God gave us with our very beings, to make way for another, which is inconfistent with it. It is in effect admitting, that the judgment of our own minds is in no cafe to be depended upon; that the faculties thereof, the very best gift which God has Spunois given

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given us, are of no real use and ser-SER M. vice to us; no, not even in difcerning which Doctrines come from God, and which do not. For if I cannot depend upon the plainest dictates of reason, how can I be assured, that any doctrine is a revelation come from God? If I receive it without confulting my reason, then for eught I know it may be an Impolture, and I am every way as liable to embrace an error, as the truth. But if I embrace it upon the tryal and conviction of my reason, then 'tis plain I admit the principles of reason are to be depended upon; which if I do, I cannot confiftently admit any thing as true, which contradicts it.

The truth of the case is this, Revelation was not intended to destroy the evidence of reason, where it might be had; but to supply the place of it, where it prov'd desicient. For tho' we are capable in many things to come at certain knowledge by a due application of our natural faculties; yet there are many things, which our reason of it self is not capable certainly to discover. It was with an intent to supply this defect of our reason, that God has at sundry times interpo-

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SERM, fed to reveal himself to us; not in such a manner, as would render both Reafon useless, and the truth of all Revelation doubtful; but in a manner agreeable to our natural faculties, which helps to confirm the evidence of reafon, fo far as it reacht, and in many other instances supplies the imperfections of it. That in fuch a Revelation should be found many things not difcoverable by human reason, many things that lay without the reach of our natural faculties, might very reafonably be expected. But to suppose God the Author of a revelation, which contradicts our natural knowledge, is in effect supposing him to destroy the very end and use of his own workmanship; and leaving us without any possible means of knowing what Doctrines are from him, and what are not; which would be overthrowing all manner of certainty whatfoever.

Another observation I shall make from the Apostle's reasoning, which may serve as a Rule to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, is, That no Doctrine, which contradicts our natural notions and apprehensions of God, ought to be received as coming from him;

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but ought to be rejected as proceeding SERM. from a spirit of error. This Rule (as I have before observed,) was directly intended by the Apostle in those words, He that knoweth God, heareth us. Where he supposes men to have some just and proper apprehensions of God antecedent to revelation, with which they compared the doctrine pretended to be of him, and finding it agreeable thereto they received it. I have already taken notice, that we are capable by natural light, to come at some just and true apprehensions of God. Whatever therefore contradicts these apprehenfions of him, ought not to be received, as a Revelation coming from him. Men could have no other way to judge what was worthy of him, or what was likely to proceed from him, but by these antecedent dictates concerning him. Should we once give up all, that natural reason teaches us, concerning his Being, Nature and Attributes, we give up the very foundation of revelation it felf, and the means of diflinguishing it from error and imposture. A Divine Revelation necessarily supposes these for its foundation, and can (I think) have little influence upon us, unless they be first known

SERM. known and affented to. Unless I am first persuaded of God's goodness and love to mankind, and his providential care of the world; how can I believe or expect, that he should regard men fo much, as to make any revelation of himself to them? Without some apprehension of his truth and faithfulnels, I cannot be satisfied, that he reprefents things truly to us. If I question his Power, I cannot depend upon his promises, or much regard his threatnings. If I doubt of his Wildom, I shall have equal reason to doubt, whether it be my wisdom to be govern'd by his directions. Thus necessary is it, to have some knowledge of God, his Attributes and Perfections, before a revelation can be depended upon, or be of fervice to us: and confequently it must be absurd, to receive any thing as a revelation from him, which is repugnant to our natural notions and apprehensions of him.

But here it may be askt, what shall they do, who thro' inattention, or prejudice, or an evil education, are possessed with wrong notions concerning him? They seem, by this Rule, to be under a necessity of being deceived. Because if they receive no Doctrine,

as coming from God, but what is con-SER M. fistent with their apprehensions of him, they must be led away by the spirit of error. That this was the case of the greatest part of the heathen world is very certain. And this is the very account the Apostle gives, why so many rejected the Gospel. He that is not of God, beareth not us: meaning, that fuch, as had been corrupted with, and perfifted in, false notions of the Divine Nature, could not relish or approve the Christian doctrine, which was opposite to their gross and carnal apprehensions. In order therefore to convince fuch persons of the Truth of a revelation, really coming from God, it was necessary first, upon the principles of reason, to correct their false notions and apprehensions of him, before any good foundation could be laid for the superstructure of Divine truths. Thus St. Paul at Athens, before he attempted to convince a people, wholly given to idolatry, of the Truth of the Christian doctrine, endeavoured first by arguments drawn from reason to instill into them just and proper notions of the Divine nature. He begins (Acts xvii. 24.) God that made the world, and all things

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SERM. things therein, feeing he is Lord of all dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Herein arguing against a notion they had, as tho' he were confined to a certain place, from the abfurdity of supposing, that the great Author of all things, whose dominion reaches to all the ends of the creation. fhould be limited or circumfcribed as they imagined. He goes on, verfe 25. Neither is worshipped (or ministred to) with men's hands, as the he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and every thing. Herein arguing, from his universal providence in providing for the support of all, that he could not stand in need of man's affiftance, to provide for him ornaments and meats and facrifices. which they did for their idols. To which he adds, ver. 29. For a smuch as we are the off-spring (or workmanthip) of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device. Herein arguing, from the notion they had of our being his creatures, that the Author of fo excellent a work could not be justly represented by a piece of fenfeless matter, tho' it had all the art that man can bestow upon it. After the same manner, we find this SERM. Apostle correcting a false notion I. the Jews had of God; who conceived him to be partial in his care of them, without having respect to the Gentiles: arguing with them from Reafon, that The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Thus careful were the Apostles to prove the confishency of their doctrine with just apprehensions of God: For which reason they made it their business to correct, and reason men out of, their false notions of him, in order to make them converts to the Christian Religion. From the two forementioned observations we may draw another equally certain, la estable anobive set

That no Doctrine, which teaches any thing wicked in it felf, or that directly tends to encourage iniquity, may be admitted as a Revelation coming from God. This will appear by confidering, First, that the Laws of right and wrong, just and unjust, good and evil, have a necessary foundation in nature, and are clearly deducible from Reason. These laws are so very obvious, and their obligation so manifest to human understanding, that generally speaking the meanest capacity (when rightly incomes.

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SERM formed of the action and all its circumstances) shall readily pass judgment upon it, whether it be just and fit to be done, or not. And tho' Men find out ways to stifle this judgment, where the guilt is their own; yet we may observe them quick-sighted and skilful enough, when others are guilty of an unjust or unworthy action. Seeing therefore moral duties and their obligation have so certain a foundation in Reason: should we admit any thing. as a Revelation coming from God, which is repugnant to them, and tends to overthrow their obligation; we should then admit, as a Revelation coming from God, that which contradicts the evident dictates of Reason: But it has been proved already, that no Doctrine, which contradicts the evident dictates of Reason, ought to be received as a Revelation from God: and therefore no Doctrine, which commands any thing wicked in it felf, or that tends to encourage iniquity, ought to be received as a Revelation from God, Secondly, As God is a perfect Being, just and holy, free from all temptation or will to commit iniquity. it is impossible to conceive (confiftently with Inch apprehensions of him) beword

him) that he should command or en-SERM. courage any thing that is wicked.
That which is against his Nature must be displeasing to him. And it is obvious to conceive, that what is difpleafing to him must be discouraged by him. Could we therefore once suppose him commanding or encouraging fallhood and unfaithfulness, injustice or cruelty, envy or uncharitableness, there would then be great reason to suspect his justice, mercy, goodness, and love to mankind. As therefore no Doctrine, which is repugnant to, or brings in question, any of the known attributes of God, ought to be admitted, as a Revelation coming from him; consequently no Doctrine, which commands, or directly tends to encourage iniquity, ought to be received as fuch, but to be rejected, as proceeding from a Spirit of error.

These are the Observations I proposed to make upon the Apostle's reasoning concerning the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. It appears, that they have a just soundation in Reason, and ought to be regarded in our examination of Doctrines, whether they be of God or not. And I am apt to think, that these Rules only, applied

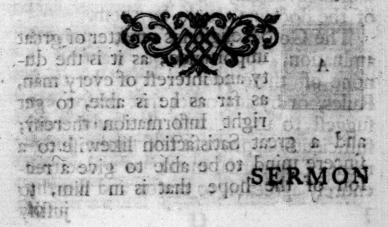
SER M. plied with care and fincerity, would I have ferved effectually to have difcovered all the Impostures, that have ever yet appeared in the world: which we generally find to have been mixt with fomethings abfurd and ridiculous, unworthy of God, or elfe destructive of moral virtue and goodness, On the other hand I think a wife man. who is heartily disposed to serve God in the most acceptable manner he is able, would hardly fcruple to embrace a Doctrine, which upon a careful examination appeared to him to have nothing in it inconfiftent with his best and soberest apprehensions of the Divine Being. If upon an impartial enquiry it appeared to have manifold inflances of wildom and goodness; a visible design to discourage vice, to promote virtue, to reform and perfect human nature; to abound with arguments and motives wifely calculated to promote this end, not fuited to the private passions of particular men, but in general to the Reason and Understanding of mankind; as he could not but think a Doctrine of this kind worthy of God for its author, he could not, without doing a fort of violence to his judgment, reject it as an Imposture,

of divine interpolition to countenance I.

Yet when we confider the want of capacity in some, and the want of attention in others, to discover that internal excellence, which we may suppose always accompanying a Dodrine coming from God; if we obferve likewife a fort of frailty in humane nature, which is commonly more affected with fomething that raifes the admiration, than what tends to inform the judgment, with inflances of power, more than with those of wildom; it feems expedient, if not necessary, that a Divine Revelation should have formewhat more, than the bare intrinsick excellence of the inflitution, to make its way in the world, and procure it a general reception : That God should interpose by his Power, to awaken the attention, as well as by his Wifdom, to convince the understandings of men; and by some outward visible impressions of his Authority, add a further weight to the internal purity of the doctrine revealed by him. Prejudice and partiality to received notions and opinions are not always conquered by SERM, the clearest reasoning. Idolatry and all the gross superstitions of pagan worship might have been banished the world, long before the coming of Christ into it, if Reason could have prevailed, and men have been perfwaded to have used their own Understandings, but in a moderate degree. But long experience has convinced us, that naked Reason has but little force, where Prejudice is concerned. And therefore God has ufually thought fit to accompany the feveral Revelations of his will to us with visible demonstrations of power; appealing to the Senfes, as well as to the Reason of men, to convince them of his Authority: fetting the feal of Miracles to the commission of his Prophets; and commanding the attention of men, as well by the wonderful works wrought, as by the excellence of the doctrine taught by them.

The Gospel doctrine will, upon examination, appear to be wanting in none of these proofs; tryed by these Rules, or by any other that reason can suggest to us, it will (I doubt not) sufficiently approve it self to the Judgment of impartial men; as a doctrine entirely agreeable to reason and worthy

of God for its Author; no way calcu-SER M. lated to sooth the passions, to encountage the vices and follies of men; but wisely contrived for the more effectual encouragement of universal righteousness, to promote the general good of mankind, the happiness and advancement of human nature. A Doctrine at first delivered to the world in no ordinary way; not by men that could be sufpected of guile or worldly design; but by One that was proved to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead; and afterwards consirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.



beareth God's words: Ic therefore boar them not, because we are not



SERMON II.

The Internal Excellency of

In the 8th Chap. of John, at the 46th and 47th verses.

Which of you convinceth me of Sin? and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God's words: Te therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.



SReligion is a matter of great importance; as it is the duty and interest of every man, as far as he is able, to get right Information therein;

and a great Satisfaction likewise to a sincere mind to be able to give a reafon of the hope that is in him, to justify

justify the choice he has made in op-SERM. position to the many false pretences, II. that are made to truth and infpiration; I endeavoured in my last discourse to lay before you fuch Rules, as feemed to me both fafe and necessary for our direction in making this enquiry. And in the first place I observed, that our Reason, which was given us for our direction in the most important transactions of life, ought canefully to be confulted in an enquiry of this nature: because without it we are liable to be imposed upon by every pretender to infpiration, and it must be mere chance only, if we be not led away by the spirit of error. From hence therefore it was natural and easy to infer, that if the use of Reason be necessary to distinguish betwoon the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of error; then no Doctrine ought to be received as true, which contradies the evident dictates of Reason; but ought to be rejected as proceeding from a spinit of error. I observed further, that in trying Doctrines, whether they be of God or not, it is nocellary to compare the doctrine, prorended to be from him, with our natural notions and apprehentions of him. By our natural apprehensions of God,

SERM. I mean fuch a knowledge of him, as may be acquired by a due use of our natural faculties. For unless we were capable by Reason, independently of the helps granted by Revelation, to acquire some just and settled apprehensions of God; it would be impossible for us to form any good judgment of a Revelation coming from him. It is by these only, that we are capable of judging, whether the Doctrine taught, be worthy of him; whether the end intended to be ferved thereby, needed the interpolition of fuch a Being: whether the manner of that interposition be fuitable to the dignity of his Nature, and will sufficiently distinguish it felf from the impositions of seducers. And in this enquiry also Reason must be our guide; not only to direct our judgment in acquiring just and proper apprehensions of him; but also in comparing the doctrines pretended to be from him, with those apprehensions of him, and in judging whether they be worthy of him or not. And from hence therefore it was natural to infer, that any doctrine, which contradicts our natural notions and apprehenfions of God, ought not to be received as coming from him, but to be rejected as proceeding from a Spirit of error

way for another equally certain, that II. no doctrine, which teaches any thing wicked in it felf, or that directly tends to encourage iniquity, ought to be received as coming from God. Because such a doctrine is not only entirely repugnant to just and sober Reason; but also unworthy of God, and quite contrary to our natural apprehentions of him.

On the other hand I observed, That if upon a careful enquiry the doctrine pretended to be of God, appeared to have a wife defign in it, to be directed to some great or good End, not in any wife to footh and encourage men in their vices, but to reform and perfect human nature; and for that purpose to have discovered some new and more effectual method, which had either escaped the notice, or was above the reach of human capacities; if it appeared to have nothing in it unworthy of God for its Author, nothing inconfistent with the wisdom, goodnefs, righteoufnefs or any other known attributes of the Almighty; nothing that favour'd of worldly policy, or that fuit the purposes of crafty designing men; then no reasonable man could have any

SERM, room to centure it as an imposture,
II. but must at least be inclined to have a
very favourable opinion of it, if not obliared thereby to confess it to be of God.

Having laid down these Rules for the cryal of doctrines, whether they be of God or not; having hewn the reasons upon which they are founded, and the necessity of applying them in order to distinguish with any safety or certainty, between the point of truth and ohe spirit of error: I shall proceed to examine the Christian doctrime by these Rules; whether any of the preceding marks of imposture can be fixt upon it, or whether we can justify our selves thereby in receiving it as a doctrine come from God. And I cannot but think it a just prejudice in favour of Christianity, to consider the first teachers of it, not infiling onty on the external proofs (by prophecy, by miracles, (Sc.) of their divine commission, but upon the internal excellence of the doctrine it felf: appealing frequently to the understandings of men, making them judges of the dochine taught by them; whether it was not agreeable to right realon, worthy of God, and entirely confident with their best and most rational apprehenfions

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fions of him; appealing likewife as to SERM. their own conduct, whether it had any fuspicion of guile or hypocrify, or worldly defign in it; whether they acted as men, that had any base private ends to ferve thereby. Where any fuch fymptoms as these appeared, they taught and commanded, that fuch should be rejected as impostors. was a mark given by our Blessed Lord, John vii. 18, to discover one that spake of himself, that he saught his own glary or advantage; adding, that he who sought his glory that seut him. was true, and bad no unrighteousnass in him: plainly making his hearers judges, whether he had acted worthy of that God, from whom he pretended a commission; or whether he spake and taught like one, that had his own private ends in view; who, by fuiting himself and his doctrine, to the vitiated tafte of worldly minds, fought to establish his own interest, reputation, or advantage in this world. So likewife in the text, refenting with warmth and vehemence the obstinacy of the Jews in rejecting him, when they had no grounds, either from his conduct or doctrine, to suspect him as an Impostor, he calls upon them to shew

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SERM. shew their reasons (if they had any) II. why they did suspect him; if they had none, to fubmit (as reasonable men) to the fuperior force of reason and truth. Which of you convinceth me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God beareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God: Hereby plainly allowing, that if they could charge his doctrine with any thing finful, or any thing that tended to encourage iniquity; if they could prove, that he had any ill defign or finister views in teaching it; that then they might be justified in rejecting him as an Impostor. And the argument urged, why they ought to receive him, is, because the doctrine he taught was irreprovable, no way repugnant to truth or reason, but worthy of God for its author, and agreeable to just and true apprehensions of him; therefore they who were of God, that is, were fincerely disposed to do his will, heard and embraced it; but others who favoured not the things that be of God, but minded earthly things, did for that very reason reject it. From the words thus explained, I shall endeavour in confirmation thereof to shew,

Firft,

First, That the great End and De-Serm. fign of the Christian Revelation was rational, wise, and good, tending to improve and perfect humane nature, and worthy the interposition of Almighty God.

Secondly, That all its Doctrines are wifely calculated to promote that End, are very agreeable to Reason, and wor-

thy of God for their Author.

First, I am to prove, That the End and Design of the Christian Revelation was rational, wife and good, tending to improve and perfect human nature, and worthy the interpolition of Almighty God. Our Bleffed Lord tells us, that his design in coming into the world was, to call sinners to repentance. And his Apostles give us the fame account of his mission, that God sent him to bless us, in turning away every one of us from his iniquities; that he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. The commission given to his Apostles after him was of the same import, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in bis name among all nations; or as St. Paul explains it, to open mens eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The need risen

SER Mineed there was of fome extraordinary interpolition on this account was very visible. So great was the corruption of mankind every where, especially among the Gentiles, to whom the Gofpel revelation was, in a more peculiar manner intended, to give light and falvation. It is confessed on all hands, that their ignorance and corruption, especially in matters of a religious nature, were as gross, as could well be imagined. The very first Principles of Religion were either wholly loft, or very miserably corrupted by them. As St. Paul observes, they had changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into images made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. So that they worshipped and served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed for ever. And these gross apprehensions about the objects of worthip led them into as gross practices in the worship thereof. For their Gods were made the patrons of their vices, and they worthipped them with all the lewdness and uncleanness and barbarity, that a wanton fancy could suggest to them. Thus the Gospel found them, walking m the vanity of their minds, having their

their understanding durkened, and be Sen M. eause of the blindness of their hearts, II. giving themselves over to lascivious ness, to work all uncleanness with greedine for Jan 1 . 2001 Lang river second grand

Let any one judge therefore, when ther it was not worthy of God, worthy of his wifdom and his goodness; whether his love of righteoufness and hatred of iniquity might not rea-fonably be supposed to incline him, to interpose to rescue man out of such a degenerate estate, to renew in him a just sense of the Author of his Being, of the great ends for which he was formed, and of the feveral duties and obligations, which his nature had laid winds of substances of the comme

Had men always preserved their reason intire, constantly consulted and closely pursued the dictates of it; it does not appear, that any extraordinary interpolition had been necessary. Uncorrupt nature would probably have led men, by the properest methods, to such a degree of perfection, as nature had form'd them for. But 'tis evident past contradiction, that men had generally mistook both their true End and the true Means of purfuing it; and had thereby acted, not only against their

SERM their own truest interest, but also against the Author of their Being, who created them for other purposes, and whole perfect nature could not but disapprove their practices. That in this case therefore some remedy was needful, to reftore human nature to its primitive defign, is not to be doubted. And it was a work, that plainly required more than human means. Reafon had greatly failed therein; nor could it be expected, that mere human reason should be able to redress an evil, which it could not prevent. Very necessary therefore was it, that some more than human means should be applied; very needful on man's part, whose natural capacities had been by fome abuse disabled to promote the ends and purposes of his creation, And it must also be acknowledged to be as worthy of God, to interpole for the perfecting his own defign: worthy of him, who first gave us faculties for excellent purposes, to restore them, when corrupted, to their primitive use: worthy of the Author of our reason to enlighten it by revelation; and of him, who at first made us, to correct the failures and corruptions that had crept into his workmanship. This 31961

This is the End proposed by the Chri-Serm. stian Revelation, to reform and perfect III human nature. This End is rational, wife and good, it plainly needed, and was worthy, the interposition of All-mighty God. And,

Secondly, It will appear that the Doctrines of the Gospel are wisely calculated to promote this good End, and are worthy of God for their Author. Here it will be proper to consider,

First, What the Gospel has propofed, as the scope and aim of our actions; whether it be fuited to our nature and perfective of it. For if the End be not worth our pursuit, the Means will not be thought worthy our attention, or our practice. I observe then, that the gratifications of our fenfual appetites and passions are not the End proposed to us by the Gospel. And it is certain these are not fit to be the aim of rational Beings; they do more properly belong to an inferior order of creatures, whose faculties are fuited to them only, and who do (no doubt) enjoy them in greater perfection, than we can do. But they can never truly fatisfie the Mind of man, which, being of a spiritual nature, requires fomething more refined

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SERM to exercise it self upon. The Gospel Ill therefore propoles, as we are rational Beings, capable of knowing God, and acquainting our felves with his excellent perfections, to make us happy in a more perfect enjoyment of him. And that not only in contemplating his great and unipeakable perfections; in receiving continual fresh discoveries of his glorious attributes ; in admiring the glory, the greatness, the infinite variety, the wonderful harmony and exactness of all his works, the wifdom of his contrivance, and the goodness of his defign in them; which is called in Scripture, feeing God, being ever with him, and living in his presence: but also in being made like him; like him in the temper and disposition of our minds; free from all inordinate and vile affections; not opprest with fear, nor transported with anger, nor rackt with envy, nor hurried by revenge, nor deprest with grief, nor carried away by fierce unruly passions after things which cannot fatisfie: but, filled with the more Godlike and delightful paffions of peace and love and univerfai benevolence, to be both happy in our felves, and well pleased with the happiness of others; desiring and delighting UI

lighting in their good, and with the SERM. utmost chearfulness contributing there-

to, all that is in our power.

For as we are focial, as well as rational creatures, the happiness propofed to us, as the Aim of our actions, is not the folitary enjoyment of things pleafing to our felves alone; but the convertation, friendship and enjoyment of other Beings of like nature with us: with whom we shall be perfectly united in one mind and one judgment; and without any jealoufies or private defigns, without any peevifh differences or difrespectful thoughts, mutually conspire to promote, and mutually de-light in, each others happiness and saristaction. And this the Apostle to the Hebrews fuggests, in faying, we shall come to an innumerable company Angels and to the Spirits of just men made perfect.

This is what the Gospel has propofed, as the scope and aim of our actions; it is evidently suited to our Nature, to the most perfect part of it, and what we have faculties fitted to pursue. We are, even in this imperfest state, capable of acquainting our selves in a good measure with God, his Attributes and Perfections, and of find46

SERM.ing delight therein; we perceive that this knowledge of him is capable of continual improvement, and that the pleasures thereof increase with our improvement therein. It is no less certain likewise, that God has made us capable of imitating his moral Attributes and Perfections, of growing up still more and more to a likeness with him, and of improving our happiness thereby. We find also, as we are social creatures, our happiness much depends upon good will, benevolence and unity of affection towards one another; that these principles of happiness are capable of being improved by us, and that we were defigned by Nature for fuch enjoyments. There is therefore in this End proposed to us by the Gospel nothing unworthy of God, nothing unfuitable to our Nature, nothing abfurd or disagreeable to Reason; but plainly a view to take men off from worldly and carnal purfuits, which are the foundation of all the inconveniences and miseries and confusions of this world, and to fix their attention upon fomething more worthy their aim, and more likely to engage them, to live foberly, righteously and godly in this world. And I cannot but look upon the

the clear, confishent, rational account SERM. given us hereof, as one of the peculiar excellencies of the Gospel. For the heathen world in general had but very faint Apprehensions of a future State: the best of them seem'd to. waver sometimes in the belief of it. But they were more at a loss, when they attempted to describe it. Then every man, as his own fancy led him, painted it in fuch colours, as best suited his own tafte. So that the Belief of a future State, where it was found, instead of encouraging men to purfue it by the paths of Virtue and Goodness, encouraged many of them to follow their own vain imaginations; hoping to find an Elysium, a state of Happiness hereafter, fuited to each man's particular fancy and disposition. But those future rewards proposed by the Gospel are plainly calculated for the encouragement of universal righteousness and goodness, without which, we may plainly fee, that a man cannot be qualified for the enjoyment of them. And as the End proposed by the Gospel is rational, fuited to the natural faculties of man, worthy of God to offer, and of man to accept, as fittelf to be made the scope and aim of his actions; fo disti) Secondly.

SERM. Secondly, The Means prescribed, or the Conditions required for the attainment of it, are wifely adapted to the End proposed, are worthy of divine encouragement, and tend to the perfection of human Nature. The first step taken by the Gospel for the perfedling human Nature, and for promoting the happiness of it, was to acquaint as with the Nature of God, his Attributes and Perfections: that by a better knowledge of him, we might know better how to qualify our selves for a more perfect enjoyment of him. For he obat propoles to be happy in the enjoyment of God, aught to have just and worthy apprehensions of him; because such as his apprehensions are, fuch will his affections be. If he looks upon him, as a rigid authere Being, the thoughts of approaching him will fill him with uneafiness and dread, not with pleature; if felfish or changeable, he can never find complacency or fatisfaction in him; if partial or unjust, this will give him ground to fulpett his interest in him; if furious or nevengeful, 'twill make thim apprebenfive of fame dangerous confequence, which may write from his fury backt by Almighty Power. Some fuch, Jetonicky.

fuch, or worse apprehensions than SERM. these of the Divine Nature, are known III to have possessed the minds of men before the Gofpel. The effect where of was, that they conceived a diflike, or aversion, or else they proposed to recommend themselves to him, by methods unworthy both of themselves and him. To these were owing the barbarous Sacrifices of their own species among the Heathen; and the hards heartedness and cruelty of the Jews to aliens and strangers. Well the elicies

The Gospel has given us such an amiable character of the Divine Being as will render him, to every confiderate person, the Object of his admiration and his love. In his Wisdom and his Good ness infinite; unchangeable in his Truth and Faithfulness; hating nothing that he has made ; no respecter of perui fons; but, as common Father of all, is good to all, that fincerely endeavour to pleafe him. Thefe apprehenfions of God, as they are worthy of him and agreeable to Reason; so are they proper to beget in us a hearty love and esteem of him, to raise in us a defire of pleafing him, and of making our felves acceptable to a Beingy thus perfectly disposed in his Nature to do SER M. do us good. And these affections towards him are necessary to prepare us for a happy enjoyment of him. For what delight or pleasure can there be in contemplating a Being, whose Qualifications or Perfections are not esteemed or valued by us? All Happiness in the enjoyment of any Being is founded upon an entire love of that Being. For this reason the Scriptures are so careful in acquainting us with the amiable parts of the Divine character; requiring us to exercise our selves in thinking and speaking his praises, in conversing with him by Prayer, in having our thoughts and defires frequently lifted up to him: that by fuch exercises as thefe, we may acquire a fettled love and efteem of him, which will greatly contribute to the happiness of enjoys ing him more perfectly hereafter.

Another Means proposed by the Gospel, for the advancement of our nature, is the Imitation of God in all his imitable Persections; in his Purity and Holines, in his Justice and Truth, in his Patience and Forbearance, Mercy and Goodness, with the like. This is both a rational and fure way of promoting our own Happiness and Persection. For as God is the great

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dandard of both, we are fure that a SERM vigorous imitation of him must greatly II. contribute to our happiness, as well as perfect our nature; by bringing us still nearer to the most perfect, as well as most happy, of all Beings. The moral Perfections of God, in which we are required to imitate him, are the foundation of his unafterable hap pinefs. If inflead of his Justice, Purity and Truth, his Mercy, Goodness and Love to mankind, we could sup-Spirit; furious and revengeful: w must suppose these unquiet passions, a they are founded in imperfection, to be fruitful likewife in uneafmets, and vexation. We feel thefe effects from fuch passions in our felves, and are always most easy in the absence of them Belides, as the Golpel propoles to make us happy hereafter in a more perfect enjoyment of God, it must certainly be a necessary preparation for it, to accustom our felves to such habits and dispositions as make us most like God; because all delightful communion depends upon a harmony and agreement of tempers, a similitude of difficultions and manners. For this reason the Gospel requires us to be imitators

SERM imitators of God as dear children, to purify our selves even as be is pure, and to endeavour to be perfect, as our Father which is in beaven is perfect.

It is with the same visible regard to the happiness and perfection of our Nature, that it requires us to be kindly affectioned one to another; to follow the things that make for peace; to be of an obliging, candid, friendly temper; to avoid every thing, that may tend to disturb or annoy one another, as linked together in fociety. Such a conduct as this, has not only a visible influence upon our present happiness, but is plainly necessary to qualify us for that more perfect Society, which the Golpel has taught us to expect hereafter. Where its proposed, that we shall live together in perfect harmony and agreement, loving and being beloved, mutually promoting and delighting in each other's good. How necessary thereto is the exercise of univerfal love and benevolence, a communicative, open, undefigning temper, and a readiness to all good offices, that lie in our power? On the other hand, how unfit must we be for the enjoyment of it, if in this life we have contracted a four, malicious, fretful habit

imitators

habit of Mind, and are thereby indif-SERM. posed either to promote, or take de- II. light in the happiness of others, as well as our own? Thus we fee by what rational Methods the Gofpel propofes to advance and perfect our Natures, to lead us on gradually to the end of our calling, till we are made compleatly happy. It wifely requires us, to accustom our felves to, and improve our felves in, those divine and heavenly dispositions, which make us like God himself; which fit us for the enjoyment of him; which have a natural and necessary connexion with true happinels, and in the vigorous exercise whereof the Perfection of our Nature must consist of the ora

And yet further, lest too great a follicitude, or regard to the gratifications and enjoyments of this world, should divert or hinder us in this progress to Perfection; lest the same cause, which sirst alienated the mind of man from God the Author of his Being, and from the End, for which he was at sirst designed, should still have the same effect; The Gospel strictly requires, that we wean our affections, as much as possible, from the enjoyments of this world, and be cautious of contracting

SERM tracting too great an intimacy with II. and fondness for them; lest these, getting the mastery of our affections, should make us difrelish and grow indifferent to those things, whereon our truest happiness does depend. Therefore we are told, that a carnal mind is enmity against God; that the love of the world and the love of God are inconfistent. And for this reason we are exhorted to abstain from sleshly lufts, which war against the foul; 10 set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth; that is, not to be over-fond of the perishing advantages of this world, whether they be honours, or profits, or pleafures; because they are apt to withdraw the Mind from other more necessary purfuits, to flacken the attention to things of a higher nature, to seduce the affections and make them difrelish those rational and more refined pleasures, which are proposed by the Gospel, as the scope and aim of our actions.

If we consider now, how just and reasonable these Rules prescribed by the Gospel are; their visible tendency to sit us for, and exalt us to, that state of Happiness and Persection, which we are encouraged to hope for in another

life;

life; and compare them with those SERM.

Strange and inconsistent schemes, which II.

had been devised by men, and were allowed of and encouraged in the pagen worship; we cannot but admire mire the wisdom and excellence of the Gospel scheme; wherein there is such a harmony between the End and the Means, and the plain design of both is to lead us gradually on to true Happiness and Perfection.

There is something yet more peculiar to the Gospel, which remains to be confidered. That is, the Motives and Encouragements it affords, to engage us in profecuting the great End and Design of it. It is certain, how great foever the End, proposed by the Gospel, be; or how fuitable and necessary foever, the Means prescribed for the attainment of it; yet if the End were unettainable, or the Means impracticable, the excellency of both would be loft to us, and neither the one or the other would be of any advantage. When we consider therefore the frailty and imperfection of human nature, the weakness of our judgment and the obliquity of our wills; we may eafily conceive, that after we have had a great and excellent End proposed to hed :

SERM. us, and proper Rules prescribed for the II. attainment of it; still there must be something wanting, to supply the deficiency of our Nature; both to attone for past offences, and to enable us more effectually to pursue for the future those necessary steps, which lead to true Happiness. Here the wisdom of the wise was confounded, and all the devices of men were found to be of none effect. The Gospel only has truly undertaken to supply this deficiency, and that in a manner worthy of God and suitable to our necessities. For,

First, With respect to the offences and miscarriages, which thro' the frailty and corruption of our nature, we daily commit, and cannot expect to be entirely free from in this imperfect state, the Gospel affures us, that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who was made a propitiation for our fins. Wherefore we are told, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses, having made bim sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteoufness of God in him. That we had need of fuch a Saviour is evident, because we had

had nothing on our own part to offer SERM. to fatisfy the Justice of God offended II. by our iniquities; nor could we affure our felves of pardon from him, without fome atonement made: Natural Reafor indeed might prompt us to conceive the Divine Nature placable and ready to forgive; yet still mankind was at a loss to know by what methods, and upon what terms, this forgiveness was to be procured. Uncertainty herein put men upon trying various ways; the use of Sacrifices was introduced; but thefe, as they could not purge away past sins, so neither had they any effect in reforming the finner, and consequently could not answer the purposes of God. Who therefore, out of his exceeding love to mankind gave his only-begotten Son; who, by the dignity of his Nature, and the acceptableness of his Person to the Father, was capable of becoming a fuccefsful Mediator on our behalf. His fufferings in our nature and our flead, as they may be supposed available in the fight of God, to procure that pardon we stood in need of, so also do they suggest to us one of the greatest discouragements to fin imaginable; feeing God chofe rather, to lay the burden thereof

SERM thereof upon his well-beloved Sori than fuffer it to go unpunished. And this dispensation is so far from clashing with our best and truest apprehensions of God, that every Attribute and Perfection of the Almighty feems to be displayed therein; his Goodness and Forbearance and Love to mankinds in that, whilst we were enemies to him, he gave fuch unspeakable proof of his concern for our welfare, and his great desire to reconcile us to himself: his Wisdom and his Justice, in contriving fuch an expedient, whereby he might forgive fin, without giving any encouragement to the future commission of it: who, in the very fleps he took to reconcile us to himself, gave sufficient demonstration of his hatred of all iniquity, and made use of such a method of propitiation for it, as might in the event prove the greatest discouragement to it. From whence it appears, that this method of redemption by the death and fufferings of the Son of God in our nature, as it was highly necessary and expedient for us; so was it in every respect worthy of God. For therein his Justice and his Mercy, his Righteourners and his Goodners, his hatred of fin and love of mankind, are dayrad1

greatly manifested; nor is one Attri-Servi

And no less consistent with the best and truest apprehensions we have of God, is that offer and affurance given us by the Gospel of the Holy Spirit's assistance, to relieve the defects and imperfections of our corrupt nature, and to forward us in the purfuit of those things which lead to Happiness and Perfection. The need on our part of fuch gracious relief, is easily perceived, and every day very fenfibly felt by us. And the' there was no obligation on God's part to dispense such a favour to us; yet 'tis plainly agreeable to the notions we have of his Goodness; it is entirely consistent with his defign of reforming human nature, it alfo manifelts his exceeding regard to righteousness and virtue, in affording us all possible help and encouragement to the practice of it. It is a great motive, as well as a great help, to our obedience; feeing he that knows the frailty of our Nature belt, has promis fed to relieve it, and in every difficulty and temptation we meet with, to make a way for our escape and to enable us its Author. Fint we may conditioned of This the

SERM. This is the Christian Scheme, the End and Defign of it, the Means prescribed, and the Motives offered, to direct and encourage us in the profecution of it. If there be any thing herein unworthy of God, destructive of the Happiness and Perfection of human nature; any thing that favours of worldly policy or defign; any thing that can ferve the private views of felfish men, or that tends to footh and encourage men in their vices, instead of reforming them; we may freely give men leave to cenfure it as an Impolture, and to reject it, as unworthy the regard of reasonable creatures. But if no suspicion of this kind can be fixt upon it; if it be visibly calculated to promote such Ends, as are worthy of God to promote; if the duties and obligations of it are entirely agreeable to Reason, and perfective of human nature; if its Motives are not contrived to work upon the corrupt affections and carnal lufts of men, but are wifely fuited to the necessities of our nature, and must in reason be acknowledged very needful for the fupport and encouragement of virtue and goodness; there can then be no reason to suspect, whether God was its Author. But we may conclude with the Apostle, that they who rejected it SERM. were not of God: that is, they were II. under the dominion of some prevailing lust or interest, which 'twas the business of this Religion to check and fubdue. Another Doctrine more favourable to their lufts and interests. and less worthy of God for its Author, would have been more agreeable, and more readily received by them: But wicked men love not the light, which reproves their works. This therefore is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

if I do not the works of my Father. believe me not: But if I do, though go believe not mis, bolieve the works.



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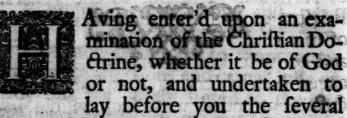
SERMONIII

CHRISTIANITY proved by

which reproves their works.

In the roth Chap, of John, at the 37th and 38th verses.

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.



kinds of Proof, which have been urged and infifted on in its favour: I thought the first and most necessary step, that could be taken to satisfie a reasonable enquirer, was to examine the doctrine it self, the nature and tendency dency of it; not doubting, but the in-Sur mot trinsick excellence and value of it, its III. consistency with the best and truest apprehensions we have of God, and with all the Need mankind was in of some divine interposition, to serve those purposes, which are directly intended to be served and promoted by the Gospel, would have a great weight with all serious thinking persons, that give themselves time to consider it in this view.

-To this end I endeavoured to fhew. how reasonable it is in it self; how visibly design'd to discourage vice, to promote virtue, uto reform and perfect human nature; what fresh arguments and motives it has offer'd for this purpole, not fuited to the private paffions of particular men, but to the general Reason, as well as to the general Needs of mankind, worthy of God to offer, and of wife and just men to be influe enced by: observing that such as Dood drine, attended with fuch visible inflances of wifdom and goodness in the Defign of it, and no way inconfiftent with any known Attribute of Almighty God, could not with any good reafor be centured as an imposture, but may justly be supposed to be from God. This DOMEST

SERM. This fort of argument, as it is read sonable in it felf, fo we find it much ministed on by Christ and his Apostles. They frequently appeal to their Doctrine, and to the Reason of mankind. to judge whether it were worthy of God or not. And indeed, if there be any fuch thing, as an internal Proof of a Divine Revelation, this is it. This is that argument, which arises out of the nature of the Institution it self. All other kinds of Proof, whether it be drawn from the completion of Prophecies, or from the working of Miracles, is external and adventitious. And the force of both is founded upon this supposition, that the discovery of things future and contingent, and the working of Miracles, are inflances of Divine interpolition ; that therefore the Religion which has these on its fide, has therein the Countenance of God. But tho's the arguments are both the fame in kind, and the strength of both be plainly founded upon the fame reason; yet we have been told, that the Proof by Prophecies compleated, is an internal Proof; but that by Miracles only external; and that this latter has no strength in comparison of the former. But to any reasonable man

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dead is at least as manifest an instance III. of Divine Interposition, as foretelling things to come. For if any one may suppose a Prophet raising others, and himself also raised from the dead, who had been justly condemn'd for imposture; we may as easily suppose an Impostor, in his life and character, answering all the characters of an antient Prophecy. And I think no part or character could be too hard for that Man to counterfeit, who could do the Miracles, that were done by our Blessed Lord, and his Apostles after him.

But yet, as if the many remarkable interpolitions of Providence, recorded in justification of the Christian Dodrine, were of no weight to engage, or confirm us in the belief of it, we are referred to the Old Testament, as the only Rule to make a just estimate of Christianity by: And by the prophecies thereof, and their completion in Christ, to judge, whether he was of God or not. Whilst the Miracles of his life. his Refurrection, and other external feals of his commission are represented as things impertinent, not to the purpose, nor of any moment in the determination of this enquiry. To this purpose

SERM. purpose we are told, that the truth of Christianity depends upon antient revelations; * and that to fuch a de-* Grounds gree, that setting aside this internal sons of the Proof from prophecy, it should seem deand Reaflitute of other, or external arguments. Christian Religion. This being the foundation on which p. 25. Jesus and his Apostles built it. \$ But † Ib. p. 31. ‡ Ibid. there seems to me no manner of truth or reason in all this. For when our evidence confifts of feveral branches, why should the whole stress be laid upon one only? Or if Christ and his Apostles built only upon this, to what purpose were those signs and wonders and divers minacles and gifts of the Holy Ghost exerted? If they added no weight to their authority, why were they wrought? why were they recorded?

In answer to this we are told, that the reason why they were wrought and recorded is, because Those Miracles were prophesied of in the Old Testament.— And therefore they are no otherwise to be considered, as proofs,—than as fulfilling the sayings of the Old Testament.—In which sense they are good proofs, and in that sense only

This is an excellent reason! As if an argument lost its usual force, by being

being made a part of a Prophecy! SERM. What kind of proof was it, when Mofas first applied it? Then it was no part of a Prophecy. God plainly intended it, as an absolute proof of his being fent by him, as we find Exoder iv. I, &c. The Israelites received it as fuch, and were convinced by it as you may perceive at the 30th and 31ft verses of the same Chapter: And the force it then had, it certainly still continued to have, only with this differ rence; that when it was first applied men had only natural reason to judge of the force of that proof, which was given by Miracles: but allowing the Jewish Religion to be of God, then it became a Proof confirm'd by the Authority of God; it being prescribed thereby as a proper Proof to confirm the Mission of a true Prophet. Deut. will. 21, 22. But 'tis arged, that by us Miracles ought to be confidered es comprehended in, and exactly confepant to, the prophesies concerning the Messiah. Very true. But will this hinder me from confidering them, as they are in themselves, and the evidence arising from them, in case they had not been foretold in the Old Testament? I can consider the Conversion of the Gentile un -

SERM. Gentile world, from the groffest Ido latry, to the worship of the one only true God, as an event foretold in the Old Testament; and tho' of an extraordinary nature, yet exactly fulfilled thro' Christ. I can also consider it as an Event entirely worthy of God to countenance, which, not only without, but against human means vigorously employ'd to suppress it, was in the most furprizing manner effected by the Gospel. One can (I say) thus confider it, abstracted from the Prophecy that foretold it, and think the Gofpel greatly justified thereby. I cannot see, why any Proof should lose its natural force, by being made a part of God's word. One would rather suppose, that Miracles did naturally carry fome evidence with them of a Divine Commission, for which reason they were fixt upon, as marks to distinguish a Prophet by; than conclude merely because God has fixt upon them for that

they could be no Proofs at all.

But 'tis faid further, That Jesus himself urgeth his Miracles to prove his being the Messiah, in that sense only, as fulfilling the sayings of the Old Testament. For when John the Bap-

purpose, that therefore of themselves

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tist sent two of his Disciples to him, to know whether he was the Messiah; Christ declares himself to be the Mesfiah, by showing, that the characters of the Messiah agreed to him, in these words. Go shew John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their fight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. * This is the passage cited: but how * 16. p.38. does it prove, that Christ urged his Miracles, only as the fayings of the Old Testament were fulfilled thereby? Here is plainly an appeal to his Miracles and Conduct, but no Prophet is expresly cited as foretelling them. There is indeed a Prophecy to this effect in Isaiah, and partly in the fame words. And allowing there was a tacit appeal to that Prophecy, it would not appear, but that he laid some stress upon the works themselves, as well as upon the Prophecy, where those works are foretold. And there is more than enough to confirm us in this opinion. The Evangelists frequenty take notice of the Conviction wrought in many by a fight of his Miracles, not as works foretold to be done

SERM. by the Messiah, but as stupendous instances of Power committed to him. Because mighty works did shew forth themselves in him. Nathaniel believed and confessed him to be the Son of God, because he knew what past between Philip and him in their absence. Nicodemus believed him a teacher come from God, because of his Miracles: not because they were foretold, but because he thought no man could do those Miracles, which he did, except God were with him. We find St. Paul converted by Miracle, notwithstanding the prejudices he had taken to Christianity from the Old Testament. I need not at prefent enquire, whether thefe Persons placed their Faith upon a valid foundation. It was a Foundation plainly allowed and approved by Christ and his Apostles. It is therefore false to fay, they grounded Christianity upon the completion of Prophecies only. Our Bleffed Lord frequently infifts upon his Miracles as a fufficient proof of his Commission; not as works foretold in the Old Testament, but as works, which of themselves manifested the Countenance and Interpolition of God. Thus (John v. 36.) The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the Same

fame works, that I do, bear witness of SERM. me, that the Father bath fent me. He III. fays to his Disciples, Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or elfe believe me for the very works (ake. (chap. xiv. 11.) The Jews, who had rejected him, notwithstanding his Miracles, he condemns as inexcusable for this reason, because be had done among them the works, which none other man did. (Chap. xv. 24.) To them he appeals in the words of the text, as works, which manifelted God to be his Father. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, tho 'ye believe not me believe the works. This point therefore being fertled, That Christ and his Aposties did urge their Miracles, not only as the fayings of the Old Testament were fulfilled thereby; but as direct Proofs of a Divine Commission: I shall proceed to consider the Need, the Use, the Validity of fuch Proof, in confirmation of a Doctrine coming from God.

If all men were impartial, and fincere, and attentive enough, in examining Doctrines pretended to be of God; it is very probable, that the internal excellence of a Doctrine coming from him would be of it felf fufficient to manifest

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SERM manifest its Author. But whether this III observation be true or not; this is certain (confidering the want of capacity in fome, want of attention in others, and the force of prejudice in most, which are a great hindrance to the clear discovery of that internal excellence, which we may suppose always accompanying a Doctrine coming from God;) That some external, sensible evidence is needful for the more effectual conviction of men; whose prejudices (experience tells us) are not usually to be conquered by naked reasoning; but to be (as it were) extorted from them by fomething, that makes a strong impression upon their outward senses, the faculties, which they are chiefly govern'd by, and which commonly have the greatest influence upon their judgmentional I for the as and a videred but

We are ready to own, that this Proof by Miracles is external, not founded upon the nature of things themselves, nor upon any natural relation, that we know of, between Miracles and Truth. Neither can we say, that there is an immediate necessary connexion, between a man's doing something beyond the stretch of human abilities, and his teaching nothing,

but what is worthy of God for its SERM Author. But the suppositions usually III. built upon, to enforce this Proof are these. Either that the extraordinary powers exercifed, by one taking upon him the character of a Prophet, or Messenger of God, are such, as none but God could convey to him; Or elfe, that they are fuch, as God would not fuffer to be exercised in the cause of imposture. If both, or either of these suppositions be found true of the Miracles wrought in confirmation of any Doctrine; then the inference will be easy and natural, that such a Doctrine has the Countenance of God, and consequently must be worthy of him, otherwise it would not be countenanced by him. Thus far therefore we may fafely argue, from our natural notions and apprehenfions of God, that whatever has his countenance and encouragement is worthy of bim, and ought to be received by us. Neither can that just and good Being be displeased with us for receiving it, his countenance being the fame as a command obliging us to receive it.

The question therefore will be, how far these extraordinary powers of Prophecy, SER M. Prophecy, of Miracles, &c. which we III. appeal to in justification of the Christian Doctrine, may be depended upon, and taken, as instances of divine countenance given to it. And here in the

First place, it will be necessary we should be latisfied, that the extraordinary works appealed to, in justification of the Christian Doctrine, as instances of Divine interpolition and countenance, are not the refult of mere human abilities, or of any natural improvement of fuch abilities by art. exercife, application, &c. but fuch as exceed the utmost stretch of human abilities, and the utmost improvement of them by natural means. For if they be any way within the reach of our natural faculties; if there be but room to make a probable conjecture, how fuch power may possibly be acquired by natural means; be the effect never fo unufual, and inflances thereof never fo rare; yet, as we are able to account for it, there is no occasion or reason to impute it to the immediate or extraordinary interpolition of Almighty God, and confequently it cannot be appealed to, as an instance of his particular countenance or encouragement. But we may be easily fatisfied, that the Aboltont. Powers

Powers exercised, and the Works ap-Ser Manner of this kind. Consider either the Works themselves, or the Manner of doing them, they appear to be quite out of the reach of human abilities, and exceeding all possible im-

provements of them. And the white the state of the state

We have feveral inflances of persons restored to life, and to perfect health at once, by Christ and his Apostles; one of which had lain in the grave four days, and was by his Word only commanded to his former date. Inveterate difeafes, that had frustrated all the means that money could procure, or the physician's skill could minister, were by him commanded to quit their hold without the help of Nature or of Art. The man that had an infirmity thirty eight years; become helpless to the last degree, was presently enabled at his Word to take up his bed and walk. Daily and hourly were the cures he wrought in this manner, upon the blind, the lame, the deaf, the dumb, the diseased, the helpless; they brought the lick out into the ftreets, where they heard of his coming; they ask'd no other help of him, but to fay, it was his Will they should be healed: Physical Strains

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SER M. healed: Constant experience had taught them to expect relief, even from his Word only; and as they believ'd, fo was it done unto them. And when his healing word could not be be tain'd, thro' the multitudes that thronged about him for relief, they found even the touching of him was a fovereign medicine; and if they could but lay hold of the border of his garment, they were made perfectly whole. If he was disposed to feed five thousand at a time, it mattered not how fearty the provision was; seeing that upon two different experiments, by his Bleffing, the fragments that remain'd, after all were filled, were more than the quantity that at first was provided. The very elements were fubject to his Command. For at his Word, the water became wine; at his Will, it fupported him, walking thereupon, as upon dry ground; the florms could not withstand his powerful Voice, and even the winds and feas obey'd him. After a course of above three years

fpent in fuch works as thefe, wrought in Judga, and the countries round about, done in the most publick manner, in places of greatest refort, fo frequently, fo openly, fo long tage, billand

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ther, that his fame was spread abroad SER M. in all the land, and his Miracles became unquestionable; he at last submitted to as publick a death; that (if possible) his Power might be yet further known, in triumphing over Death it felf. He died by the hands of his enemies, that his Death being unqueflionable, there might be no room to bring the Miracle of his Refurrection in question. He died as a malefactor and impostor; that God might have the greater opportunity of vindicating him from that unjust centure, by raising him again from the dead. And the malice of his enemies prompted them to watch him even in death, to expose, tho' it could not prevent, that malicious flory of his Disciples stealing him out of the grave. But their malice, their fentence against him, their care to see it executed, and their zeal to suppress his growing fame, were all fruffrated by that unparallel'd Miracle of his Refurrection. A fact confirm'd to us by a cloud of witnesses, who fealed their testimony with their blood. A fact, which if it needed confirmation, was confirm'd by the great and wonderful events of many fucceeding years. For they, who were chosen to be his witnesses.

SER M. neffes, did not only confirm the fact by their Testimony; but the whole course of their life and actions proclaim'd him living: not only the innocency and unblameableness of their lives, their unshaken zeal and steadiness to the cause he had engaged them in, their contempt of life, and all the advantages of it, their chearful behaviour under the greatest persecutions and tryals and tortures, and the most cruel deaths that malice could invent; I fav, not only these were great arguments of their Veracity, and help'd to confirm the Testimony they gave: But moreover, the Miracles they daily wrought in his name, the Powers they had received from him of doing the fame, and even greater Miracles than he had done; these, which they shew'd openly to the world for many years together, were publick inflances not only of his being alive, but of his Power likewife which was manifested in the actions of his Apostles, who according to his promife, had received that Power from him. Did he appoint them after his departure to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature? he furnished them, tho's illiterate men, with languages for every nation: , e(y())

nation; and in that one Gift enabled SERM them in the most effectual manner, both to spread, and to confirm his Doctrine. Did he promise to be ever with them, to support them under all the tryals, he had told them they should meet with in the course of their Miniftry? What better proof could be given of the performance of his Promife, than the chearfulness, and even loy they exprest, in fuffering the greatell hardships imaginable for his take? Did he tell them in his life-time, that he would visit the Jewish nation with feverity for their opposition to him destroy their city and fanctuary, make the place of their habitation defolate, and fend them away captive into all the world? some of them lived to see his threatning strictly executed, not they who were the recorders of it: nor did that generation pals away till rall was fulfilled.

These and such like are the Facts appealed to, in confirmation of the Christian Doctrine; Facts, reported to be done through a course of sorty years; not in a dark unactive age, when ignorance and indolence had lest a gap in history, to be filled up afterwards with the idle dreams and inven-

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SER M. tions of enthusiastick and designing III. men: but in an age the most polite and learn'd, active and inquisitive, and too well skilled in the affairs of life, to suffer any gross imposture to steal into the world unobserv'd, or if observ'd, without sufficiently exposing it.

Such Works, fuch Events as thefe,I believe every body will allow, were not the refult of mere human abilities, tho' never fo greatly improved by art or application. The Works themselves, and the Manner of doing them, plainly prove them to be in the strictest sense of the word Miraculous. This therefore is certain, that without the interpolition of fome Superior Agent far exceeding man in power and capacity, these works could not have been done, nor these extraordinary effects produced, which are appealed to in justification of the Teachers of Christianity. It is obvious therefore to ask, whence then had they those Powers? who that superior Agent, that interposed to give them such mighty countenance? And here one would be apt to look immediately to God, the Fountain of all power, to whom all things are possible. For it was properly his work, who was Author of our nature, to add what faculties he Serm.
pleased to those originally given; and III.
therefore might be presumed to have

given these powers unto men.

But then another question will arife, whether there are not other Agents, superior to us in power, the stretch of whose abilities we know not? whether by their affiftance thefe extraordinary events might not be brought about, and that in confirmation of an imposture? If our adversaries should tell us, there are not any fuch intermediate Powers; then the Christian Doctrine is at once establish'd by the extraordinary powers given to the first teachers of it; which being allow'd fo exceed, very far exceed, all human Abilities, must therefore be derived from God immediately; and confequently the Doctrine they taught had his countenance obliging us to receive it. But if they allow there are intermediate Agents superior to us in power, whose malice does prompt them to use that power to countenance imposture; then also is the foundation of Christianity establisht, in the necessity of some Divine Interpolition to guard us against impostures, set on foot and countenanced by the unknown powers AMDIO.

SERM powers of those wicked Agents. Then III. ballo we may reasonably conceived from The Justice, Goodness, and other known Attributes of Almighty God, that he will take care to diftinguish in fome remarkable manner, his own interpolitions from the workings of those wicked spirits : for otherwise his inoterpolitions would be fruitles, and our pleed thereof would remain protwith-Manding unsupplied. Bur as this ought not to be granted, and cannot with a-'ny reason be supposed; our next enquiry must be, "how the interpositions of God may be diffinguished from the workings of those wicked spirits; and Whether the countenance given to the Gofpel and its Teachers, will come under the Rules necessary to determine hus in this weighty point. And here 1 I must observe,

First, That some have thought this point might be settled by considering the Nature of the works themselves, and the Manner of doing them supposing the Powers exerted in considering of the Gospel, to exceed the hatural powers of any created Being, and consequently to have been derived from God immediately. How far this supposition may be depended up-

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on, I cannot fay: but I think there is a SER M. great deal of uncertainty in it, because we are, not acquainted with the feveral degrees of created Beings above us, we know not what powers they are possessed of, nor can we pretend to say their power extends to far, and no farther. It is not doubted, but they have faculties far exceeding ours, and that they act in a quite different manner from us. To fay therefore, they cannot see farther into futurity, than we can; that they know no more of the vital union between, foul and body, nor how the vital operations are perform'd or obstructed, better than we do, is freaking by guess only, and not by knowledge. All that we certainly know is, that as they are created, fo they must be limited Beings; that their Powers do not extend to ethe restraint of God, nor can be exergifed but by his permission. And this think enough to fatisfy us, in the prefent case. Being affured from the Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of Gad, that he will never fuffer greater Powers to be exerted, and more extraordinary works to be wrought for our delution, than in Confirmation of the nois

SERM. the Truth. He that acts without restraint III. and limitation, to whom all things are eafy, as well as possible, will either diflinguish his own interpositions by effects that wicked spirits cannot imitate; or will restrain them from fo doing, when they fet up in opposition to him. For we that are to judge of those external interpolitions whether they are of God or not, must judge by the number and greatness of them: the more and greater those extraordinary effects are, the greater character they bear of divine power, and the more we are inclin'd to believe them to be from him, of whom 'tis faid, that he doth wonderful things, and that he is girded about with power.

There is no manner of absurdity to suppose God interposing in a miraculous way to countenance a Revelation coming from him; but it seems needful upon many accounts, to awaken the attention of mankind; whom, we commonly find, more affected with instances of Power, than with those of Wisdom; and to need some outward sensible demonstrations of his Authority, to engage them to pay a due regard to his Precepts. Hence it has become the general opinion, and even expecta-

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tion of mankind, that when God is SERMI pleased to communicate to men any III. new Revelations of his Will, he will likewife accompany them with fome vifible manifestations of his Power. Thus when God would have fent Mofes with a special commission to Pharoah King of Ægypt, and to the Israelites; 'till he had fome extraordinary power: communicated to him; he scrupled to go, despairing of success; but after-o wards, he went without hesitation, and it is faid, that, When Ifrael faw the great work they believed the Lord and bis servant Moses. And it is no less natural, or customary with mankind (call it which you will) when Miracles are wrought to ferve opposite purposes, to close in with that fide, on which the most and greatest Miracles appear to be wrought; conceiving (as we justly may) that superiority of Power is on that side, where the greatest instances of this kind, appear. We cannot therefore conceive it confishent with the Honour, any more than 'tis with the Wisdom and Goodness of God, to fuffer greater instances of power to be exerted in the cause of imposture by wicked spirits, who are under his restraint; than what he will certainly give 001570

SERM: give in vindication of his own come miffion: And we may certainly depend, (as certainly as we can upon a ny of the known Auribores of God) that he will never fuffer feducing fpirits to exceed the powers given, to persons commission d by lim : but will for the fake of Truth, the interest of true Religion, the security of mankind from the wiles and devices of impollors, keep the balance inclined, (in this and every other kind of proof) on that fide which he favours and has a mind to countenance and promote. Thus it was in the cafe of Mofes and Phuroab's magicians, they were born down by the superior Powers exerted by Moles. Thus Bulah prevailed against Baul's Prophets, by calling for fire from heaven to confume his facrifice, which the idolatrous Prophets could not do. Tho it may be reasonably supposed, that the Devil, by his own natural nower, could have done the fame in their favour, if God had not reftrain'd him.

> If this reasoning then be good; if we are satisfied, that wicked spirits and their power, be it what it will, are under God's restraint; if it be utterly unreasonable to think, that God will

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ever fuffer greater inflances of power SER M to be exerted in countenance of imposture, than in confirmation of the truthe then are we affined that the miraculous interpolitions, in favour of the Gospel, were not the effect of any diabolical affistance; but were acts of countenance given to it by God hims felf. For they are unquestionably fuch as no Prophet elfe ever had or pretended to And we dare to put the cause of Christianity upon this issue, that if even any Doctrine had the like countenance with it, then we will infife no more upon Miracles wrought in confirmation of it. Secondly, We may be affired, that the powers exerted to countenance the Christian cause were not from wicked Spirits, but from God; because the Berions, to whom those powers, and that cause was committed were not fit infiruments to be employ'd in the cause of imposture. It is one of the distinguish. ing marks of imposture, that there is ufually a great deal of worldly wifdom mixt with it. Men have fome felfish passion, some by-ends to serve, which they are willing to profecute at any rate; before they can be inclined, or feduced, to engage in a cause of such a nature. Such they are, that lie open

SERM and exposed to the fnares and infinuations of the Devil, and they are the instruments he usually works withal But it is impossible to fix any fuspicion of this kind upon Christ or his Apostles. They discovered themselves in all their conduct to be the most disinterested, humble, upright persons living: instead of making any private advantages to themselves, of that esteem and reputation they had procured thro' the wonderful works wrought by them, they both refused and despised them. They forfook all the comforts and conveniences of life, exposed themselves to continual hardships, not only of hunger and thirst, of cold and nakedness, having no certain dwelling places; but to all the frowns and discouragements of this world; to perfecutions and tryals and mockings and fcourgings; to the cruellest tortures and the cruellest deaths, that the malice of their Enemies could invent for them. On the other hand, they treated all mankind with the utmost humanity and goodwill; never feeking to revenge their wrongs, or to redrefs with violence the ills, that were heap'd upon them; but with meekness and forbearance they fuffer'd the lofs of all things, and that DIE

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that with the utmost chearfulness too, SERM that the world might fee, they had IIII fome strong inward consolation to support and strengthen them, even a consciousness of their own integrity, and a fure reliance on God, as an encourager of the cause they were engaged in. To fay that fuch men were knowingly engaged in, or made the inffruments of imposture, is to speak against reason and observation and experience. And to fay, that God would fuffer fuch fincere difinterested men to fall under fuch a strong and fatal delusion; so much honest and well-meant zeal to his honour and fervice, to be perverted to the cause of error and imposition; and fuffer it to be done in fuch a manner, that the most impartial and difinterested minds should be most effectually wrought upon by it; is a fupposition so harth and unreasonable, and implies fuch a gross contradiction to the known Attributes of God, that it: cannot need arguments to remove it, or words to expose it. We may therefore again conclude, confidering the Instruments employ'd, what kind of Persons they were, to whom those fupernatural powers, appealed to in confirmation of the Gospel, were com-1011 mitted:

SER M. mitted; that those Powers were not:

III. communicated to them by any wicked:

Spirit, to serve the cause of imposture;
and consequently that they were given

by the Spirit of God:

Laftly, If it were possible, onprobable, that wicked Spirits had fught powers, and were permitted to use them, and that fincere difintereffed men were exposed to such inevitable dehisions; yet it is incredible, that wicked Spirits should be affifting to fo good a purpofe, as that, which was visibly defigned and effectually promoted by the Gofpel. The defign of wicked Spirits is (no doubt) to allenate men; as far as they are able, from that supreme spiritual Being, whom they hate and refift to feduce mankinds if they are able, from chuling him as the object of worthip: if this fail, to corrupt his worship with unacceptable superstities ons and detestable oblations ; to engage them, tho' in words they confess him yet in works to deny him; not too trust in him or seek his favour; but to depend upon, and delight in, the uncertain enjoyments of this life, and to purfue them by fuch methods, as are utterly displeasing to him. And where any thing of this kind appears to be the

the intent or confequence of a pre-Sexue tended Revelation, no Miracles, I own, III. how fflany or great foever, would be fufficient to perfuade me, to look upon them as inflances of Divine Interpolition, or to receive the Doctrine countenanced by them. But on the other hand, when a Doctrine has no tendency of this kind, but is evidently defigh'd to recover an idolatrous world, from the worldip of stocks and stones, the fallibnings of their hands, and the fancies of their Brains, to the knowledge and worthip of the one supreme eternal Cause of all things, on whom every thing depends; to correct their mean unworthy apprehensions of him, and to posses them with thoughts and affections towards him, fultable to his excellent Majesty; to love, honour and fear him above all things; to imi-tate him in his Righteoutness, Good-ness, Truth, and all his other imitable Perfections; to worthip him in heart and not in tongue, as one that knows the inmost thoughts of it: I say, when we find a Doctrine thus calculated to promote the honour of God, to reform and perfect humane nature, and offering more effectual motives to engage and keep us in the exercise of such things;

SER M, things; what should induce us to sufpect, whether the external inflances of countenance, by supernatural means, were from God or not? Is it a cause any way likely to be favoured by wicked feducing Spirits? Could the Devil be fupposed to consult and promote the ruin of his own Kingdom? Which was not only the event, but the visible de-fign of the Christian Doctrine. The very notion we have of wicked Spirits is, that they would destroy, or cor-rupt, as far as they are able, the worship of God, and mis-lead mankind in their pursuit of true Happiness. And the world had been too visibly wrought upon to these purposes; when the Gospel appeared to reduce men to the worthip of the true God, and to the practice of every thing that is reasonable, just and good. It was an Objection therefore of much greater malice than force, to impute the Miracles wrought in confirmation of the Gospel to the affistance of the Devil. For the defign, whether God was the Author of it or not, was directly contrary to the nature of wicked Spirits, and visibly destructive of the Devil's empire over the understandings of men. It is certain therefore that it had not any countenance things are

countenance from wicked Spirits, and SER M. confequently those miraculous works III. wrought in its favour, exceeding all whoman capacity and power, were instances of Divine countenance and en-

couragement given to it.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew you the Nature, Use and Validity of this Proof by Miracles; that it is not only a mere probable argument in favour of Christianity; but a direct, reafonable and convincing Proof of Divine Interpolition to countenance and support it: Yet we find many little cavils and exceptions taken at it, and much pains used to perswade us, that it cannot be depended upon. Sometimes it is fuggelled, that the History, where these Miracles are recorded, is doubtful and to be fuspected: then again, suspecting their Abilities to main-tain this cavil, they attack the Evidence arifing from them. Thus, shuffling from one to-pick to another, they feem well fatisfied with neither. But passion, prejudice, and a determin'd opposition to Christianity, for no other reason, but because 'tis one of the domineering religions, (as they call every thing, that is embraced by a considerable part of mankind) has engaged them to difpute

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SERM pute every thing, that gives it counteIII. nance; and this they call freedom of
thinking: Which in short, in their
fense of the word is, to cavil at every
thing, to acquiesce in nothing; to represent every religion as talle, to substitute none as true in its room; to
pull down, but not to build; and to
seem wifer than the rest of mankind,
by bringing every thing into question,
which the wisest and best of men have
approved, and for that reason endeavour'd to establish.



MOMSTEED they call every thing that is confiderable part of merkind) has engiged them to dit



SERMONIV.

Proof by MIRACLES vindicated.

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If I had not done among them the works, which none other man did, they had not had fin.

T being very obvious to obferve, that Christ and his Aposses, in justification of
the Christian Doctrine, insist
much upon Proof by Miracles; not only as works foretold to be
done by the Messiah, but as works,
which manifest a Divine Interposition
to countenance and support it: I endeavoured, in my sast discourse, to
shew the Nature, Use and Validity of
that kind of Proof in confirmation of
a Doctrine coming from God. In doing

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SERM, ing this, my principal design was to IV. prove, that the Miracles wrought in confirmation of the Gospel were instances of Divine Interposition; supposing that a Doctrine countenanced thereby would readily be acknowledged to be from God: His countenance being the same as a command obliging

us to receive it. To ARIM ad lo

The argument we chiefly use, prove them to be instances of Divine Interpolition, is taken from the Number and Greatness of them, wherein they exceeded all that were ever done in confirmation of any Doctrine whatfoever. Afcribe them to any human power, or to any possible improvements thereof by natural means, we cannot. What intermediate Agents there are between God and us, what powers they are possessed of, we know not. Yet, allowing them to have as great as may be, consistent with limitation and subordination to the power of God; allowing also there are some wicked enough to do their utmost to deceive us; we are fure, as fure as we are of any of the known Attributes of God, that he will never fuffer greater inflances of power to be exerted, greater marks of countenance to be given to an Impofture,

flure, than in confirmation of the Serm. truth. And for a fmuch as we have no IV. other way of judging of these external Interpositions, which are of God, but by the exceeding Greatness of them; it would be unnatural to suppose, that God would suffer the advantage in this respect to be on the side of imposture, which would be rendring his own interpositions of this kind vain and of no effect.

It is upon this account we find our Blessed Lord in the text condemning the Jews as inexcusable: Because he had done among them the works which none other man did: having not only distinguish himself from persons suppetted of imposture, by exceeding all the Powers pretended to be exercised in their favour; but having greatly exceeded likewise all that went before him, and were by the Jews, for their very works sake, received as true Prophets.

But 'tis objected, that Christianity will not admit of this kind of Proof, that Miracles (be they never so many and great) avail nothing in justification of it. Because the grand fundamental article of Christianity was, that Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews predicted in the Old Testament; which could not

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appear,

Proof

SERM. appear, or be proved, but from the Old IV. Testament *. If the Proofs therefore for Christianity from the Old Testable.

*Ib.p. 12 ment be not valid, if the arguments founded on those books be not conclusive; and the Prophesies cited from thence be not fulfilled; then has Christianity no just foundation.— Nor can Miracles avail any thing in the case: For Miracles can never render a foundation valid, which is in it self invalid, can never make a false inference true, can never make a Prophesy fulfilled, which is not fulfilled; can never mark out a Messiah or Jesus for the Messiah, if both are not marks.

16.1.31. out in the Old Testament †. And again,
32. If Jesus be not the person prophess'd
of, as the Messiah in the Old Testament, his Miracles will not prove him

prove from the Old Testament, that Jesus was the Messiah prophesy'd of therein, will be another question: from whence also I hope we shall be able to bring further Proof in confirmation of our Religion. My business at present is to consider, how far this reasoning is an objection against the Validity of Proof by Miracles. And I think 'tis none at all. For whatever is a valid Proof of a Divine Commission, is a valid

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Proof of every Article taught and Serm. confirm'd by vertue of that Commif-IV. fion: But I have already proved, that Christ's Miracles were a valid Proof of his Divine Commission; consequently they were a valid Proof of his being the Messab, which was an article taught and confirmed by vertue of that commission. To say, that if he were not the Messah, his Miracles will not prove him to be so, is begging the question; and by the same way of arguing, you may invalidate all kind of Proof whatsoever.

But it may help us to judge a little better of the force of this Objection by trying it upon fome other lubject. Suppose a person arguing from the many barbarities committed by Nere, that he was a very cruel person: would it not be ridiculous to hear a man, objecting against the Validity of this Proof, fay; if he was not a cruel man, all the barbarities committed by him will not prove that he was for By the fame way of reasoning you may as effectually invalidate the Proof drawn from Propheties compleated, and fay; if Jesus was an Impostor, let the Prophelies of the Old Testament, relating to a Melliah, be never for many, and H 2 never

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SER M. never to clearly fulfilled in him, they IV. will not prove him to be a true Prophet; for the completion of Prophe fies can never render a foundation valid, that is in it felf invalid; can never make a false inference true; nor mark out a Prophet coming from God, if he never fent him, nor gave him commission to act and teach as such. Nay you may go further, and argue after the fame manner against the Authority of God himself. For his Authority cannot render a foundation valid, that is in it self invalid; cannot make a false inference true; nor prove a thing to be what it is not. There is no man, I am perswaded, but what is able to give a ready answer to such objections, by telling the objector, that his supposition is absurd and ought not to be granted. The same answer therefore will ferve us in behalf of the Miracles wrought in confirmation of the Gospel. That 'tis absurd to suppose (for reasons already given) that God should fuffer for many, for great, fuch uncontested Miracles to be wrought, in justification of a Person taking upon himself a character, that did not belong to him. We do not pretend that Miracles will prove a thing to be what

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compleated, nor yet the Authority of IV.
God, nor any other good Proof whatfoever. But if it be a good argument
against the Validity of a Proof, that it
will not prove contradictions; we are
ready to own, that we have no valid
Proof in defence of Christianity, and
we are glad we have not.

I beg leave to make one observation more, which I hope will effectually clear this point, viz. That our Author's state of the case is not strictly true: For the grand fundamental Artiele of Christianity is not, that fefus was the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament; but that Jesus was a Prophet, or a Teacher come from God: and one argument, used to convince the Jews that he was fo, was by showing, that the characters of a Meffiah, or great Prophet promised in the Old Testament, were fulfilled in him. His Miracles were a distinct kind of Proof from this, and did, antecedently to the confideration of Prophefies compleat ed, prove him to be a Prophet, or Teacher come from God. Even that perfectly conclusive Proof (as he calls it) drawn from an inspired Book must said the H 3 and the finally

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SER M. finally be reduced to this of Miracles, IV. and cannot stand without it.

We are told, That it is a necessary method for new Revelations to be built and grounded on precedent Revelati-

* Ib. p. 20. ons *; that therefore the truth of Christianity depends, as it ought, on ancient Revelations contained in the Old Testa-

+ 1b. p 25.ment †. Now suppose we had proved, that Christianity is justly and clearly founded upon Judaiim, and were able to justify all the parts of Christianity from the Old Testament, fo far, that he, who received the Old, would be obliged by strictest reason to admit the New Testament to be of God: This would not answer the purpose of a fincere inquirer, whether the Christian Doctrine be really of Divine Institution; until he is further fatisfied, that the Old Testament was really of Divine Institution. Consequently this new question would arise, How do we know the Scriptures of the Old Teftament were of God? If this also be founded upon a preceding Revelation, with which it ought to be compared, and by which it ought to be justified; we must then also continue our inguiry about the Truth and Divinity of that y

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that Revelation likewife; and fo muft SERM. fill run the chain backward, 'till we IV. come to the first link, to a first Revelation, which had no preceding one, whereon it could be founded: and there we shall be obliged to look out for fome other Proof, than what our Author has infifted on, as necessary in the case of Christianity. For that could not be built upon a preceding Revelation, could not be justified by arguments drawn from an inspired Book. When therefore he shall be pleased to tell us, what Proof was requisite, what Arguments were sufficient to justify that first fundamental Revelation; then we undertake to prove, that the Christian Revelation had that Proof, is equally capable of being juslifted thereby, and consequently what he infifts on, as a necessary method, is needless in it felf, as 'tis tedious in the application. I will venture therefore from this observation to lay down the following proposition: That the Christian Doctrine had (in-

That the Christian Doctrine had (independent of the Old Testament) as good Proof, as any first fundamental Revelation could be supposed to have; that therefore to deny the Validity of it, would be to overthrow the Founda-

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aid not

SERM tion of all revealed Religion. For all VIV. the Proof a first Revelation could have, besides the internal excellence of the Doctrine it felf, must be from some external interpolitions of Providence (fuch as Miracles are) in its favour. And if fuch miraculous interpolitions were then a fufficient Proof of Divine Countenance, what does hinder, but they should be so still? Had the first fundamental Revelation greater instances of this kind, than the Gospel had? far otherwife. We appeal to our adverfaries in this case. Let them name that preceding Revelation, which had fuch inftances of Power exerted in its favour, or any thing like them. If they can do this, they are excufed by our Bleffed Lord from believing on him. He tells men freely, that if he had not done the works, which none other man did, they that disbelieve him would be without sin. But if the Proof he gave of this kind exceeded, what any first fundamental Revelation could be supposed to have; if it could have no other Proof but this; what will be the confequence of denying the Validity of it? It must in short be this, That the foundation, upon which the first was built, was invalid. And if that fails

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for want of sufficient Proof, then all SERM. the fucceeding ones, built upon it and IV. upon one another, must fail with it; and confequently our Author's neceffary method, of building every new Revelation upon a preceding one, is by himself invalidated, by endeavouring to invalidate the Proof by Miracles, which is in reality the fundamental

support of it. and our believes

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But if a first Revelation could be establisht, and sufficiently confirm'd without an appeal to a preceding Revelation; if Miracles were available in inflification of it, and ought to have been admitted as valid Proofs; then will they be as valid Proofs in justification of a new succeeding Revelation. And if the new one has the same Proof and better of the kind, than the Old one; there can be no necessity (at least) that the New should depend upon the Old; because he who admits the foundation, upon which the Old is built, cannot without manifest inconsistency reject the New, which has, independent of the Old, a better foundation of the fame kind than it. manual ne Auga

Suppose one were arguing with a Heathen, as wife as our author, about the Truth of Christianity: who upon and, top his \$

SERM. his scheme should infift that Christi-IV. anity ought to be founded upon fudaifm. If he should be convinced of this, would he rest here, or would he not go on to question us about the Authority of the Old Testament? It is natural to think he would. And then we must either find out some preceding Revelation, by which it may be instified, or else have recourse to the proof before mentioned. If we could justify it by reference to some preceding Revelation; he would question us about the Authority of that likewife; and fo on, 'till we came to a first: and then he must either submit to the Proof before mention'd, or else unreafonably infift on fuch fort of Proof, as the subject is not capable of. But if at last he allows the Validity of it, then the only folid foundation, that, on which we must ultimately depend, is the fame which Christianity has, independent of all preceding Revelations, viz. That the Doctrine is not repuga nant to Reason, and that it had the external Proof by Miracles to confirm its Divine Authority.

> It feems to me therefore a very strange Paradox to affert, That Gentiles, before they could become Christi,

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ans, ought to believe Judai fin to come SERM. from God.* I am fatisfied the contrary IV. was true in fact; that instead of receiving the New upon the Authority of 1h 1.95. the Old, they received the Old upon the Authority of the New Testament. And it was the eafier and more rational way, to convince them first of the truth of Christianity; because the Proofs thereof were greater in themfelves, nearer at hand, and better to be perceived by Gentiles, than the Proofs whereon Judaism was first founded. And to me it is one of the most inscholaftick ridiculous Rules of reasoning in the world, to prove a proposition by a medium, lefs clear and certain, than the proposition proposed to

But 'tis faid, If we consider the Nature of things, we shall find, that it must be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce among men (who in all civilized countries are bred up in the belief of some reveal'd Religion) a reveal'd Religion wholly new, or such as has no reference to a preceding one for the case of Christianity. Therefore to the credit and confirmation of Christianity

them.

SERM. Stianity let it be acknowledged, thro' what great, and (humanly fpeaking) insuperable difficulties it prevailed over the most civilized Parts of the most civilized States, | Greece and Rome; to whom it was a Reli-gion wholly new; a Religion that had no reference to any preceding one received by them; but directly contrary to theirs in all respects; which declared theirs to be not only corrupt, but falle from its original, never to have proceeded from God, but from the Devil. Yet this Religion, so wholly new to them, so clean contrary to theirs, did spread it self among them in a most astonishing manner, not only without, but against human means vigoroufly employ'd to suppress it. And tho' it combated the passions, the prejudices, the interests, the lusts of men, and every thing that could possibly prepossels them against it, yet it gain'd ground more than any ever did, that had all these to favour it. As great an Exception, as perfect Novelty may feem to be to a Religious Institution, Christianity was such, and as such was it represented to the Heathen. St. Paul, both at Lystra, and at Athens*, preaching it to people wholly idolatrous, ne-

ver mention'd the Old Testament to

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them, nor the reference of Christiani-Serm.
ty thereto. He argued with them up- IV. on the principles of Reason (for rational they were, and this was all the disposition they had for Conversion) against the Religion they embraced: and to establish the Doctrine he taught, he wrought a Miracle himfelf, and appealed to that great Miracle of Christ's Refurrection, in confirmation of it. And inflead of haranguing them about preceding Revelations of the Divine Will, he tells the Athenians, that 'till then the times of heathen ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; Because he bath appointed a day, in the which be will judge the world in righteoufness, by that man whom he bath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*. So far from attempt-Ad xvii. ing to convert them first to Judaism, 31, 23. that he never mentions that Religion to them; but endeavours at once to establish Christianity upon the principles of Reason, and by the Miracles wrought in confirmation of it. And this method, observed by the Apostle in making Gentile converts, I have proved Schwiff to be valid, and that it cannot be overthrown. thems

SERM thrown, without overthrowing the IV. foundation of all revealed Religion. I

hall proceed to prove

That it was valid with respect to the Tews likewise; because the Christian Revelation has thereby the same Proof. and greater in its kind, of Divine Authority, than the Jewish Religion, and confequently that every fincere confiftent Jew is obliged to receive it, For Miracles are by the Old Testament allowed and appealed to, as Proofs of a divine commission. These were the credentials of all their Prophets. By vertue of them they claim'd the belief of the people, and for their work's fake, their Doctrine was received as true, and acknowledged to be from God. I need not detain you with instances of the later Jewish Prophets: that one of Moser will suffice for all; because he was the Founder of their Religion. For no confident Jew would deny the Validity of that proof, upon which he perceives his own Religion to be founded.

When God first called Moses to fend him to the children of Ifrael with his Authority and Commission; Moses objected, Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for Majordi.

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they will fay, the Lord bath not ap-SERM. peared unto thee. (Exod. iv. T.) Let IV. us fee then, what method God took to remove this objection, and to convince those to whom he was fending Moses, that he had appeared unto him. He bid Moses cast his rod upon the ground; he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent. He bid him take it again, he did, and it became a rod in his hand. This Miracle was to be a proof of his Mission, (v. 5.) That they may believe that the Lord God of their Fathers bath appeared unto thee. To this were added two more, that if the first failed, these might give them full conviction (v. 8. 9.) Moses went accordingly, and took Aaron with him. And when the meffage was delivered, and the fighs wrought, it is faid the people believed, (v. 31.)

Here then is a plain and undeniable Proof from the Old Testament, that Miracles were design'd by God, as absolute, valid Proofs of a Divine Commission. They were the Foundation upon which the Jewish Religion was first built. And their great Prophet, by whom it was revealed, was to depend upon this fort of Proof in confirmation

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SERM. firmation of his mission. Upon this IV. fingle confideration therefore I would ~ask, How could a Jew, consistently with his own Religion, which was founded on this Proof, or with himself (if he receiv'd it, as it was at first recommended by God) reject our bleffed Lord, bringing with him the fame Proof, but far exceeding that, which Moles brought, both in the number and greatness of the Miracles done by him? The Miracles wrought by Moses were not prophesy'd of in any they could not be antient book, considered by them, as fulfilling the fayings of some preceding Prophet. In short, natural Reason, not any peculiar motive or circumstance attending them, engaged the Ifraelites to regard them, as instances of divine countenance, given to the perfon, by whom they were wrought. And if they were admitted, as fuch, in confirmation of the Fewish Religion; I believe it will be hard to give a Reason, why they should not be allow'd the same weight in justification of Christianity. Therefore I think it absurd to make the Old Tellament the fole foundation of the New, when we have (exclusive of the Proofs drawn from thence) greater and furer evidenc

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evidence of the Truth and Divinity SERM.

of the Christian Revelation, than we IV.

have of the Jewish Revelation, both

from the Nature of the Revelation it

self, and from the external Proofs
brought to confirm it. But to proceed

a little further.

The Jews could not without inconfiftency deny the Validity of this proof by Miracles in justification of Christianity; because it was the Proof fixt upon in their Law, to try a Propher by, who should come unto them in the name of the Lord. Their Lawgiver Mases, far from suggesting, that the Dispensation granted by him was to last for ever, that it admitted of no change, ingraftment, or new Dispenfation to fucceed it, had told them that God would raise them up a Prophet, like unto him, put words into his mouth, who should make a discovery of his will to them. But that this promise, and the expectation raifed in them thereby, might not expose them to the false pretences of Impostors, he went on to tell them how they should distinguish the true from the falle Prophet. They were to expect a fign from him; he was either to undertake fome extraordinary thing himself.

SER M. himself, or to foresell some extraordi-IV. pary event, which should happen in his favour, as an instance of divine countenance given to him; and according as the Prophet failed, or succeeded in this, they were to receive or reject him. Put what construction you will upon this direction given by Mo-les for the tryal of that Prophet, who should come unto them in the name of the Lord, Christ could not be deficient upon tryal, having given in both kinds the most and greatest signs of divine countenance, that any Prophet ever gave, or pretended to give in confirmation of his million. To lay therefore, that his Miracles avail nothing in his inflification, is to fay, that Mafes started a difficulty which he could not folve: that he gave his followers fuch directions, as would, if follow'd, inevitably deceive them: that he put a case of greatest importance upon the most precarious proof; and by his very caution took the most effectual way to betray them into that confequence, which he caution'd them against For it ought to be observed, that this is the only Rule given them for the tryal of a Prophet, who should come unto them in the name of the Lord; though he himielf

he had taken upon him to treat expression at ly on that subject, had started the difficulty of caution to prevent their being deceived: plainly suggesting, that this was the best and safest experiment they could make, that it might of it self be depended upon, and ought to be admitted by them as a sufficient justification of a Prophet, speaking to them in the name of the Lord.

The Old Testament, therefore, it is plain, instead of invalidating this Proof by Miracles, does in the most effectual manner establish it; not only by prescribing it, as a just and valid Proof of a Divine Commission; but also by resting it's own Authority thereupon. So that a consistent Jew is obliged to admit this Proof, as a valid one, or else to give up his own Religion too, as want

ting a just foundation.

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But to forcen the Jews a little from this charge of Inconsistency, and to furnish them with something like a plea for rejecting our Blessed Lord, notwithstanding his Miracles, we are told, that, If at any time God does permit Miracles to be done for the Consirmation of a false presented Mission, we have directions from the Old I 2 Testament

SERM. Testament not to regard such Mira-IV. cles *. This is a wonderful wife observation! very instructive! and of great * 1d. p. 32 use, to diffinguish true from false Prophets! As much as to fay, do not believe a false pretended Mission to be a true and real one upon any pretence whatfoever. But what need had our Author to cite the Old Testament in justification of this ufeful caution? There is fo much glaring truth in it, that (I dare fay) no body would have difputed it with him, if he had brought neither Argument nor Authority to support it. Authority it has none, but his own: therefore let him take the credit of it to himfelf, and not throw it away upon Moles, who has no man-

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The words of Moses referred to, as containing this excellent advice, are Deut. xiii. 1, &c. If there arise among you a Prophet—and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods—Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet. Now take this direction of Moses according to the natural construction of the words, and it appears to be a very useful, as well

well as a very intelligible exception to SERM. a general rule. He does not suppose, IV. that God would fuffer more or greater ~ Miracles to be done by a Prophet, attempting to seduce them from the worship of the only true God; but admitting, that fuch a one should be permitted to give a fign or a wonder, left unwary minds should be surprized by them, he gave them this standing caution, never to regard that fign, nor the Prophet giving it, when his Doctrine tended to Idolatry. The exception we readily admit of. The Christian Doctrine is entirely free from it; and confequently the Miracles wrought in its favour are still, according to the Old Testament, unexceptionable Proofs in confirmation of it. But the natural construction was not to our Author's purpose; he was therefore tempted to put a new gloss upon it; by which he has given it fuch an unlucky turn, as makes it neither rule nor exception.

But 'tis added *, That the Jews' 16. p. 36. might, till they were set right in their interpretations of the Old Testament,—as justly reject Jesus, asserting his Mission and Doctrine with Miracles, as any other person, who in vertue of Minacles, 13 racles,

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SERM. racles, would lead them into Idolatry. IV. Now I think he might, with more honefty, more conclusiveness, more confiftency with himself, have faid, That Jefus had, in vertue of his Miracles, legal authority to fet the Jews right in their interpretations of the Old Teflement; than he could say, That till abey were fet right, they might jufly reject him notwithstanding his Miracles. Moses forbid them to regard the Miracles of one that attempted to lead them into Idolatry; he never forbid them to regard his Miracles, who should attempt to fet them right in their interpretations of the Old Testament. It is agreed on all hands, that the Jews might have erred in their interpretations, even of their OW N books; they themselves allow'd it, and expected that the Meffiab should fet them right; and beyond all this, the objector himfelf has made it a part of a Prophet's chavacter, to retrieve from corrupt glaffes, innovations and traditions a former Re-* 1b. p. st. welation *: What better Proof then could Jefus give the Jews, that he was a Prophet, and confequently had Authority to execute this part of a Pro-

phet's character, than that which was

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fixt upon by their own Lawgiver Mr-Stam.

This Observation will furnish us with one good reason, why an honest Gentile could not allow the lews to understand their OWN books better than the Apostles: because it would be an inflance of too gross partiality to prefer the interpretations of interested, prejudiced, factious men, who had no one pretence to inspiration, to the sense of the Apostles, who had forfaken every worldly interest, all the advantages of life, were fincere, upright, par tient even unto death; and had withat the greatest Marks and Proofs of a Divine Commission, greater than those very Prophets, by whom the Scriplivered.

We may also observe, how proper it was, that the Messiah should bring some other Proof, besides that of Prophesies compleated, in confirmation of his Mission. For as long as men are subject to passion and prejudice, govern'd by their interests and inclinations, there will be disputes about Scripture and the interpretation of it; their worldly affections will mix themselves with, and influence their religious in-

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SER M. quiries. God therefore forefeeing (as indeed human forefight might) that cavils and disputes would arise about Prophesies and their interpretation, thro' ignorance, or prejudice, or both, thought not fit to rest the Authority of his Son upon the bare completion of Prophesies in him; but gave him other extraordinary Proofs of his Commission, to bear him out against such cavils

and exceptions. It will be asked, perhaps, Did not Christ pretend to be the Messiah, spoken of in the Old Testament? Did not this oblige the Jews, who believed the Old Testament, to search it, and fee what Prophesies there were to that purpose, and whether they were fulfilled in Christ? This we allow, and this we infift upon, as another Argument distinct from that of Miracles, in justification of the Christian Doctrine. But 'tis abfurd to infer from hence, that this was the only Proof infifted on, or that Proof by Miracles ought therefore to be excluded. For that Miracles were infifted on, as a valid Proof likewife, is evident from the text, and from many other passages of Scripture. And it will appear, that even before the most material Prophesies were fulfilled, colilies

filled, the Jews were obliged to ac-Serm. knowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, IV. through whom they were afterwards to be fulfilled, by vertue of his Miracles.

To make this matter clear, let us fuppose the character, Christ took upon him, to be founded upon fuch predictions as these. That there should one arise of the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth should be bleffed; who should be of the Tribe of Judah likewife, to whom the gathering of the people Should be; a stem of the root of Jesse, to whom the Gentiles should seek; that by him a new Covenant should be establisht; that to this Covenant, or law, which should go forth out of Zion, all nations should flow or be converted; that the Mediator of this Covenant should be ill received, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, pour out bis foul unto death, make it an offering for sin, and be numbred with transgreffors; that afterwards be should fee of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; that he should have the heathen for his inberitance, and the utmost parts of the earth

SERM earth for his possession; that thro' him IV. idolatry should cease, the name of God we become great among the Gentiles, to whom he should be for a light and for fabration. We need not at prefent enquire, whether these Prophecies related to the Messiah, or not. I would only ask, upon supposition that a Prophet should come, pretending to be the person design'd to fulfill the purpofes mention'd in these, or the like Prophefies? when, and upon what motives he ought to be received? Ought he not to be received, till all these Prophelies are fulfilled? If fo, then it would be impossible, the he were a true Prophet, that he should ever be received, or that the Propheties should ever be fulfilled. For you may obferve, that the most material characters fuppose the conversion of many; fo that the completion thereof must for low, and could not precede their conversion.

It was therefore plainly necessary in such a case, that a Prophet, really design'd for the completion of such Propheties, should have some other Proof, antecedent to their completion, to justify his Mission: and it was also necessary, that men should be convinced by

the person, in whom they were after. IV toards to be fulfilled. And what more proper Proof could such a Prophet give to convince men, especially the Jews, that he was the person, throwhom those Prophesies were to be sussibled, than Miracles! which had been the usual credentials of all their preceding Prophets, which had been prescribed by Moles for that purpose, and were indeed the Proofs, upon which their own Religion was founded.

There is a case exactly parallel to this in the Old Testament, which will belp to illustrate and confirm this Observation. It is the case of Mases, when God sent him to bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt. They had a Prophecy relating to this event; for God had told Abraham many Years before, Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land, that is not theirs, and shall serve them—and that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge, and afterwards they shall come out with great substance. (Gen. xv. 13, 14.) Moses was the Person chosen to be employed in this assar. But the nature of the Prophecy is such, that it was necessary he should

SER M. should be received by the Ifraelites. as appointed by God for that purpole, IV. before the Prophecy could be fulfilled. They were not to wait the completion of the Prophecy, before they believed him; but were first obliged to believe him, in order to the completion of the Prophecy. What method then did God choose to convince them, that Moses was the person design'd by him for that work? He gave him the power of working Miracles; for this reason, as it is said, that they may believe that the Lord God of their Fathers bath appeared unto thee. They did accordingly admit of this Proof, and were convinced thereby, before

the Prophecy was fulfilled.

From hence therefore it is manifest, upon the Jewish scheme, that Miracles are a sufficient Proof to consist the Mission of a Prophet, antecedently to the completion of those prophesies, which he comes to sulfill; and that, by vertue of Miracles only, the Jews might, justly and consistently with the Old Testament, have received Christ as the Messiah foretold therein, even whilst the Prophesies relating to him were unfulsilled. And it is plain they had done no more, than what their fore-

forefathers did, and were required SER M. to do in the case of Moses. Moses IV. told them he was sent by God to sulfill the purposes of the Prophesy delivered to Abraham, he shewed them the signs, which God had given him to confirm his mission; when they saw them they believed, long before the

completion of the Prophecy.

Let us suppose, in the case last mentioned, that the Israelites had caviled with Moses, as our Author does in the case of Christianity, and had faid to him, If the Proof from the promise made to Abraham be not valid; if that Prophefy be not fulfilled; then has your pretended mission no just foundation. Nor can your Miracles avail any thing in the case: for Miracles can never render a foundation valid, that is in it self invalid; can never make a false inference true; can never make a Prophesy fulfilled, which is not fulfilled, &c. I fay, if the Ifraelites had argued thus with Mofes, and perlifted in it, what would have been the event? The question answers it felf, they would not have hearken'd to him, and consquently the Prophesy could not have been fulfilled. But it happen'd that the Israelites were not acquainted

SERM.ed with this fubtle fetch; and thereIV. fore they acknowledged the mission
of Moses, upon the evidence of his
Miracles only: not doubting, but that
he, who had such powers committed
to him, would in the event suffill all
Prophesics, which related to the Cha-

racter he took upon him.

If a man has a mind to invalidate the force of this Proof by Miracles, I think the Old Testament the worst book he can search for arguments to his purpose. And for a Jew to argue against the Validity of that Proof, is to be inconsistent, both with himself and his Religion. Therefore our Blessed Lord had just reason to condemn the Jews, as inexcusable in rejecting him; because he had done among them the Works, which none other man ever did.

Having considered the Objections raised against the Validity of this Proof by Miracles in confirmation of the Christian Doctrine: it will be proper likewise to consider, what has been said against the reality of those Miracles: because our adversaries, doubting of their Ability to invalidate this evidence, have endeavoured to red us of it; and would infinuate, that we have

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no good grounds to believe, that those SERM Miracles were ever wrought. In one IV. place we are told, that Miracles faid to be wrought, may be often justly deem'd false reports, when attributed to persons, who claim an Authority from the Old Testament, which they impertinently alledge to support their pretences. How far Christ and his Apostles may be charged with impertinence in the appeals they made to the Old Testament, in justification of themselves and their Doctrine, is a fubject, that does not come under our prefent confideration. Our business now is to confider the Inference that is drawn from this falle furmile: that therefore the Miracles faid to be done by them may be deem'd false reports. Suppose then, upon examination of the pallages of the Old Testament cited and applied in the New, I should meet with forme, that I could not easily account for; but feem'd rather to me to be impertinently applied; would this justify me in rejecting the best attested his flory in the world, of facts reported to be done in a learn'd, inquifitive, active age; not in private, nor in some obfoure corner of the world, but in publick, and amongst the most civilized people

SERM people and nations? What necessary IV. connexion is there between feeming impertinence and certain unfaithfulness? why must a Suspicion of the one make a man depend upon the Reality of the other? This is certainly a new way of discrediting facts, and if it were allow'd of, I believe all antiquity must fall before it. But let me ask again, Would not a man of any candour and modefly, in fuch a case as this, be more inclined to suspect his own judgment in those things, which feem to him impertinent; than, out of mere compliment to his own judgment, condemn the best attested facts in the world of forgery and imposture? For on the one hand, how very possible is it, that there might be fome circumstances known very well at that time, which would fufficiently justify those seemingly impertinent applications, which we at this time may be utterly ignorant of? on the other hand, how very improbable is it, that the publick actions of half a Century in the most polite and knowing age, should be handed down to us undifproved, and yet the whole relation be nothing but fable? When both these cafes are well confidered, I believe an impartial mind will be much more difbloodid Proof But then we will

further

posed to admit the former, than the SERM-latter of these suppositions; and con- IV. sequently will allow, that the credit of the Miracles ought rather to remove the fuspicion of impertinence, than the fuspicion of impertinence destroy the credit of Miracles fo well attested.

It is objected again, that Miracles, however convincing they may be to those that see them wrought, yet are not proper for the conviction of afterages. But that Prophesies fulfilled seem the most proper of all arguments to evince the truth of a Revelation design'd to be universal: because a man who has the Old Testament in his hand, which contains Prophesies, and the New, which contains their completions, may have a compleat demon-stration of the truth of Christianity. Whereas arguments of another nature (meaning Miracles) fuch as relate to the Authority and genuiness of books, the persons and characters of Authors and witnesses, require more application and understanding, than falls to the share of the bulk of mankind*. As to 1b.p. 19. what is faid of Prophelies fulfilled, and the evidence ariling from thence, we have no reason to contest it, but are pleased to find it allow'd of, as a just and valid Proof. But then we infift further.

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SERM further, that the Proof by Miracles is equally conclusive, and as proper for the conviction of after-ages. For the difference, which the objection makes between the one fort of Proof and the other is only imaginary; the fame application and understanding is necessary in both cases. If the Authority and Genuinels of books and authors must be enquired into, to know whether the Miracles recorded in the New Teffament are true; the same must also be done, and that with the same exactness, to know whether the Prophesies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New. For before you can tell whether they were fo fulfilled, as we read they were, you must be satisfied, that the history which records their completions is a true one. If you are affured, or have no reason to doubt of the truth of the history; then you have the same assurance, that the Miracles therein recorded are true likewise. So that you come as easily at least, to the knowledge of Miracles wrought as of Prophefies compleated; and the very fame fleps, which lead you to any certainty about the one, will lead you to equal certainty about the other. The affurance we have, that the Miracles recorded Not then is Roots

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corded in the Gospel were so wrought SERM: as they are recorded, depends upon IV. history; the truth of that history depends upon the credit of Authors: so likewise, when the Gospel takes notice of an event, whereby some Prophecy of the Old Testament was fulfilled, I must depend as much upon hiflory and the credit of the Authors for the truth and reality of that event, whereby the Prophecy was compleated. Suppose, for instance, I were to enquire whether the Prophely of Isaiah was fulfilled by Christ, The eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; the lame shall leap as a bart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. If I can be affured that this Prophecy was fulfilled; then by the same step am I assured, that these Miracles were wrought. And if I can be affured of thefe, I can as eafily, and by the fame methods be fatisfied of the truth of any other facts or Miracles there recorded. Besides, the objector fays, that not only thefe, but Christ's Miracles in general were prophefy'd of in the Old Testament, confequently it is necessary to know that all his Miracles were performed, * 1b. P. 37. before you can be affured that all the K 2 Prophefies

SER M. Prophesies relating to him were fulfilIV. led. The objection therefore, if it be
of any force, is equally good against
the one fort of Proof, as against the
other.

But that it is not good against either, will appear by confidering the abfurdities, that follow from it. To establish and confirm a Divine Revelation, it is necessary that there should be some extraordinary interpositions of Providence to give it countenance. The question therefore will be, who ther these extraordinary methods, once taken and publickly executed in one age and nation, and a credible wellattested history thereof, shall be deem'd fufficient for the fatisfaction of distant ages and nations; or whether it be neceffary, for the establishment and support of a Revelation design'd to be universal, that the same or like meafures thould be repeated in every age and nation to the end of the world. If this latter be infifted on, then in order to support the Christian Revelation, and to fulfill the Propheties of the Old Testament, in a manner not liable to this exception, Christ must have appeared on earth and dwelt amongst us, and died, and rose again,

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and afcended up to heaven, and return'd Seg M. hither, and repeated the fame actions IV. over and over continually; than which nothing more ridiculous could be imagined, nothing more unreasonable could be expected. If this method therefore ought to be rejected; then it follows, that the other (for there is no medium) is the only proper and reasonable method, and will therefore be deem'd fufficient by all reasonable men: That a Revelation, once confirm'd by some remarkable interpositions of Providence, should afterwards be received and acknowledged upon the Authority of a credible well-attefted History.

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That the Gofpel History is fuch (if any fuch there be) cannot well be doubted. If we confider, that it is not fo much as pretended, that it flole into the world in a dark unactive age; or that the writers of it had any countenance from the Powers of this world to give them credit. The facts related by them were chiefly of a publick nature, faid to be done in places of greatest concourse, where the people always reforted: fo that in their writings they appeal their adversaries, and challenge them to disprove any part K 3 of

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SERM. of their relation. Besides, from the very first spreading of it, it made a great noise in the world, and met with very violent opposition. All the ways. that malice could invent, or power execute, were used to discountenance and suppress it. Yet the testimony of the Apostles prevailed; nor could any one fact attested by them be disproved. We have accounts still remaining in Pagan and Fewish writers, where their power of working Miracles is freely al-

low'd and acknowledged. So that their testimony is not invalidated, but rather confirm'd, by the confession of adverfaries. Consider again, the writers of it are not charged with any worldly

or base design, that could tempt them to turn Impostors. No dishonesty in their conversation, no avarice or an-

bition, no private lust or passion appeared to fway them. The testimony

they gave was at their peril; they perfifted in it at all hazards; forfeited every thing, that was near and dear to

them in this world, in defence of it, endured all manner of reproaches and

persecutions, and racks and tortures for the fake of it, and at last sealed it with their blood. In short, there is no

circumstance wanting, that helps to confirm h

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confirm the truth of any ancient histo-SERM. ry, which this has not; but many ex- IV. traordinary and remarkable circumstances there are concurring to give it credit, which no other history can boast of resemble william Y Time

The Truth of the Gospel history therefore, till fome better objections than these brought against it, will by every reafonable man be admitted; and consequently the Reality of the Miracles, there recorded, remain undifputed. And I do not doubt, but the Validity of the Proof arising from them will fufficiently manifest it self, notwithstanding all the little cavils and exceptions raifed against it; and that we shall have reason to be satisfied with our Saviour's argument, that the works which the Father had given him to finish, the same works, which he did, bare witness of him, that the Father had Cent bim.



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SERMONIV.

CHRISTIANITY justified by the

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For if that first Covenant bad been faultless, then should no place bave been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Bebold the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a new Covenant with the bouse of Israel and with the bouse of Judab: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their Fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.

HAVE hitherto consider'd the Christian Revelation, as independent of any other preceding Revelation: As an institution intirely agreeable to Reason, and worthy of God for its Author; not

CHAISTIANITY justified, &c. 137

not in any wife contrived to ferve the SERM. private ends, or finisher purposes of V. worldly designing men; but wisely calculated to reform and perfect human nature: Not depending upon human means, nor upon the countenance of the powers of this world to make its way into it; but upon many extraordinary and miraculous instances of countenance, which must without all question have been given to it by God himself.

And in these respects, I observed, it had as good Proof of its Divine Authority, as any first fundamental Revelation could be supposed to have; and consequently could not be overthrown, without overthrowing the foundation of all revealed Religion. That it had likewife the fame Proof, but much greater in its kind, of Divine Authority, than the Jewish Religion had; confequently that every fincere confillent Jew was obliged to receive it. And further, That the first Publishers of it had all the Proofs of Divine Att thority, that were required by the Old Testement from any future Propher; confequently that the Jews were obliged by their own Scriptures to acsegbalwond e renote from tru f could 164

SERM knowledge Christ and his Apostles as

W. true Prophets. To a basis and a prophets

However, as Christianity does bear some relation to Judaism; as the Old Testament is acknowledged, by the Authors of the New, to be of God; we are ready to enter upon a further justification of our Religion, and undertake to shew, that 'tis not only consistent with that preceding Revelation, but also justified by it.

But 'tis a question thrown in our way, and ought therefore to be consider'd, what relation Christianity does bear to Judaism? Ought all the parts of Christianity (every Article and Doctrine of it) to be proved from the Old 15. 1.4. Testament *, as having its divine authority from thence †? Is the Old Testament.

+ Ib. p. 91. thority from thence †? Is the Old Tella-+ Ib. p. 13. ment the fole true canon of Scripture ‡?

Is Christianity wholly revealed there-

| Ib. p. 91. in ||? Is it only the secret spiritual + Ib. p. 80. meaning of those Scriptures |? Does it teach none other things than those

which Moses and the Prophets did

th. 16. Say t. Is it not properly a new Law, but Judaism explained, and set in a due light? or (in other words) mystitib. p. 15. cal Judaism? This is the representa-

nothing more remote from truth could

be imagined. For the difference be- SERM tween the two Institutions is very great and palpable. The Dispensation granted to the Jews was partial, calculated for, and fuited to, the temper, difpofition and circumstances of that single People. The Gospel Dispensation is general, directed to all mankind, and makes no difference between Jew and Gentile. The Jewish Dispensation was imperfect, indulged them in many things, not otherwise allowable, but for the hardness of their hearts; on the other hand it required many things, not needful in themselves, not acceptable to God, which were intended only as props to fecure them from finking into Idolatry. It confifted, as St. Paul observes, in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation *. And was added because " Heb. 9. of transgressions t, to keep up some to. fense of Religion in them, till the 19. more perfect Dispensation was introduced. It was therefore to them as a Schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ + + v. 24: Wherefore the ordinances of it are called rudiments, weak and poor elements ||, to which as children they were || chap 4.9. confined 1, to fecure them from other + v. 3. mischievous . 210

Sen in mischievous effects, till they became
V. capable of better things. And for
these reasons it was to be changed.

* Heb. 7. disannulled for the weakness and unprositableness of it; because it made

† v. 18.

† v. 19.

**nothing perfect †: And as the Apostle observes in the text, a new one was to

be introduced in its room; a better Covenant established upon better pro-

And as such, it is neither reasonable, or probable to suppose, that it is wholly contained in the Old Testament, or that all the parts of it should be proved thereby, or that it could have its divine authority from thence. It was promised, in general terms under the Old Testament, to be revealed; but it was not particularly revealed, till the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How far we may be justified in receiving it as a New Law or Covenant properly so called (admitting the Old one likewise to be of God) will the better appear by considering, how far it is necessary, that a New Revelation should agree with, or depend upon, a preceding One. It is indeed very reasonable to believe, that all Revelations, coming from God, will so far have re-

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lation to each other, as to agree in the Serent. main point: That the ultimate defign of each should be the Glory of God, and the improvement of human nature; that tho' differing in the Means, they should centre in the End, and have a mutual, tho' not an equal, rendency to promote virtue and goodness, by which the Glory of God and the good of mankind are most effectually promoted! But that this great end, wor thy of God and beneficial to mankind should always be prosecuted by the same measures; or that the corruption of mankind would always admit of the fame remedy; nois neither mecellary, nor probable. The wife providence of God, acquainted with the various difpositions and propensities of our na-ture, might (no doubt) see occasion to vary his methods, according to the particular circumflances and temptations men are lubject to at particular times : and thereby be induced to use fuch means at prefent, as prefent circ cumstances require and men's capacities will admit of; and as nature improves and higher views prefent themselves, former methods may become ufelefs, and new ones necessary for compassing those higher views. From ocian!

SERM. From whence it will appear, That it is not necessary, that all the Doctrines of a new Revelation should be founded on, or be capable of being proved by, a preceding one. For unless it has higher views, or (at least) better methods for compassing the same views, it would be needless. So that 'tis effential to the very supposition of a New Revelation, that it should make some new discoveries, beyond what were contained in, or revealed by, the preceding One. It is no less reasonable to think, as the wife dispensations of Providence are fuited to the tempers and circumstances of men; that many things, once needful with regard to those circumstances, to which they were adapted, should, as those circumftances alter, become needless, and confequently be repealed. And therefore it is not necessary, that all the religious Institutions, required by a preceding Revelation, should be continued under a fucceeding one: but 'tis rather natural to expect, that many of them should be repealed, and new ones substituted in their room

All the foundation then, that a New Revelation need to have upon a preceding One, is, that the supposition of

n swards

a New Revelation be not repugnant SERM to, or inconfishent with, the declared V. defign of the preceding One; and that it attempts to repeal nothing, which is in it felf, or was by that Revelation declared, immutable. If the New One be thus far reconcilable with the Old One, then will it fland upon the fame foot with a first fundamental Revelation, and will be capable of being confirm'd and establisht by the fame methods. My business therefore at present shall be to show, That the Christian Revelation is in these respects fairly reconcilable with the Jewish Revelation, which it fucceeded; which did both admit of a New One to fucceed it, and of the repeal of feveral Laws and Ordinances instituted by it.

It is objected indeed, that the fews believed their Law to be eternal 1 1b.p. 34 and expected no New Institution to fucat ceed, or take place of it. And it may be fo. We are not accountable for every notion embraced by them. This is not the only corrupt tradition they received, contrary to the clean, express words and natural meaning bell their own Scriptures. We are ready to prove, from passages of the Ota Testament, taken in their plain gando obvious.

SERM. obvious, in their strict and natural fense, that their Law did admit of many alterations and of a New Law, or Covenant to fucceed it which will, hope, remove the objections of the Fews against the Christian Doctrine; because it tended to alter, or repeal the Laws and Customs delivered to

them by Moses. Asive dorn and the To justify Christianity in this respect was plainly the design of the Author of this Epifle to the Hebrews. Who, amongst many other Arguments brought to prove, that the Law of Mojes was not unalterable, appeals to a passage of the Prophet Jeremiah (xxxi. 31, 60) wherein a change thereof was in the plainest words foretold. The words are those recited in the text. Behold the days come, faith the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the boufe of Israel and the house of Judah. Not according to the Covenant, that I made with their Fathers in the day, when I took them by the band to lend them out of the land of Egypt. The Apostle's reasoning from this citation is plain and obvious. If that first Cover nant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. That is, If it had been free from defect and

and infufficiency, and could effectually SERM have promoted the ends and purposes of true Religion; then it had been intirely needless to have had recourse to any new method, or to have altered that, which could not be mended. Therefore he fays in another place, *Gal iii. 21. If there had been a law given, which could have given life, then verily righteousness (or justification) had been by the law. The promise therefore of a new Covenant, as it supposed some defect or imperfection in the old one; for it implied a change or alteration of it. For in that he faith a new Covenant (fays the Apostle, v. 13.) he hath made the first old; now that which decayeth, or waxeth old, is ready to vanish away. Nor can any thing be plainer, than that the Prophet spake of the Covenant, or Law given to the Jews by Moses: that this Covenant should cease, and that a New one should be establish'd in its room; in theroom of that which God gave them, when he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Agypt; in the room of that which they neglected, and they liv'd under no other. Nor was the new one to be the fame in kind with it, NOT ACCORDING

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V. their Fathers. The Jews therefore are in no wife justified in objecting against the Christian Doctrine, that it tended to change the customs which Moses delivered to them. Moses never caution'd them against a Prophet, that should make such an attempt. Their own Prophets not only suggested to them, that there might, but also expressly told them that there should be such a change.

Whatever grounds therefore there might be to say of others, it could never be truly said of the fewish Revelation, That it was far from intending a change, ingraftment, or new dispensation; that it forbid all alterations, or pretended to be the last dispensation

Ib. p. 21 intended*. For besides what is so positively asserted by Jeremiah in the words cited by our Apostle, the Prophet Daniel goes further, and sixes a time for the bringing in everlasting righteousness; that is, a covenant which should last for ever: intimating, that the Covenant which they then lived under, was not such. And he surther declares, that at the time when Messiah should appear for that purpose, He should cause the sacrifice and the oblation

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oblation (which were necessary parts SERM. of the old Covenant) to ceafe. Chap, ix. 24, 27. The Prophet Isaiah distinguishes this new Law or Covenant by the Universality of it; that whereas the first was partial, directed to, and calculated for, the Jewish people only, in this Gentiles as well as Jews should be included. Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob, and be will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Is. ii. 3.) And afterwards we find him speaking of a person appointed for a Covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. (Chap. xlii. 6.) and it is faid (verse 4.) The isles shall wait for his Law. The Prophet Malachi calls him (Chap. iii. 14) The messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; not of the old Covenant, that was Moses, who was not expected; but of a new and better Covenant, for which reason they are faid to delight in him.

These passages furnish us with a satisfactory answer to the Jews objection against Christ, that he changed L 2 the SERM. the customs delivered by Moses. But we need not content our felves with this answer. Arguments many and clear and conclusive offer themselves to justify all the alterations made by Christ with respect to the law of Moses. Arguments, that will both justify the giving those Laws at first, and the repeal of them afterwards. Arguments that will justify the wisdom of repealing them, without derogating at all from the immutability of God, who gave them. To give you as clear an idea as I am able of this matter, I shall enquire,

First, What those rites and customs were, which were repealed or changed by the Golpel; whether they were in their nature alterable, and upon what reasons they were first founded?

Secondly, I shall endeavour to prove That the repeal of them, the time and manner of doing it, were entirely confiflent with the wifdom and immutability of God, who gave them. And because it may be objected from some passages of the Old Testament, that they are declared unalterable, I shall endeavour in the

Third and last place to prove, That according to the declared intent of the Old Testament, they might, and were

to be alter'd.

First,

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First, I am to enquire, what thole SERM. rices and customs were, which were changed or repealed by the Gofpel; whether they were in their nature alterable, and upon what reasons they were first founded. And here it is casily observed by any one that reads the Gospel, that Christ never attempted to make any infringement upon the natural or moral law. Every thing, that is in its own nature good, that has any rendency to promote the honour of God, the real interest of mankind in general, or the perfection of human nature, is firially required and inculcated by the Gospel. Even a conformity in things indifferent, the practice whereof has no fuch natural tendency, but may accidentally prove a means of peace, or of furthering fome really good purpose, is thereby recommended to us. The Gospel therefore cannot be faid to have difannulled any thing, which may possibly be of fervice to mankind, either in a religious or a civil capacity. All that can be urged, as repealed by the Gospel, are things in their own nature indifferent; things that could not be acceptable to God for their own fake; things merely external, which, as they had no relation to the worship and service of a spiritual Being,

SERM. Being, so neither had they any direct, V. or natural tendency to perfect, or im-

prove human nature.

Being.

Consider their facrifices, the feveral modes and rites of their publick worthip: what was there in them, either fo agreeable to the Divine Nature, or fo beneficial to the human, that they might not in any wife be abolished? God does not eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats. He often affured the Jews by his Prophets, that he had no pleasure in them. Different kinds of meats, and different ways of preparing them, may be agreeable to a fenfual appetite; but what are thefe to a spiritual Being, who has no carnal sense or appetite to gratify? Had they any direct tendency then to make the worshipper, that offered them more perfect? Let any rational man be judge in this case; whether the blood of these facrifices could have any efficacy to take away fins, or to purge the confeience that was defiled? If at any time, by putting them in remembrance of fin, they helped to raife in them an abhorrence of it, fo far they were of fervice: but this effect was rather accidental, than necessary; and we are sure a much more effectual method, to shew entine working and fervice of a forting

the odiousness of sin to God, his great SER M. displeasure against it, and consequently to raise in us a just abhorrence of it, has been contrived by the Gospel. One may imagine of how little fervice their facrifices were in this respect, when we read the complaints which God makes by his Prophets of his most zealous Worshippers this way. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of (that is, I nauseate) the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; be that facrificeth a lamb, as he that cutteth off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if be offered swines blood; be that burneth incense, as if be bleffed an Idol. We should have met with no fuch complaints of this way of worship, if there had been any thing in it acceptable to God for its own fake, or if there had been any good consequences necessarily attending it.

Consider next the Place appointed for this worship, there was no natural excellency in it. God himself had changed it, under the Yewish dispensation. Besides the whole world is God's, it was all created by him, and by his continual Presence in every part of it he

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SER M. supports and preserves it; nor can any place fanctifie the man, but a man may who be holy and acceptable to God in any place. Confider further that Tribe, or order of men, appointed to minister in this place of worship. Were they, antecedently to that institution, in any wife more worthy, or better qualified to stand before God in his house, than the rest of their brethren? or might not any other tribe with equal reason have been fer apart for that purpole? and when they were so set apart, was it at all necessary, or essential to their office, that they should wear that one particular fort of apparel and no other? Of all these outward things, there is not one more acceptable to God than another. When they are required by God, then indeed the observance of them is necessary; necessary in obedience to him that commanded it, not for the fake of the thing commanded. Thus the case is represented by the Prophet (Jer. vii. 22.) I fpake not (fays God) to your fathers, nor commanded them concerning burnt-offerings and facrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, obey my woice. This was all God had respect to in their Offerings, whether they were offered out of

of a principle of Obedience: for this SERM.

was all that could render them accept V.

table to him; in every other respect the nauseated, he despised them: and
they who observed them out of a superstitious fondness for the things them
selves, instead of being approved, were

feverely reprimanded.

According to all the rules therefore we have of judging, nay according to the judgment of God too, these things had no inherent necessity obliging men to the observance of them. And if their Obligation depended, as it certainly did, upon mere Institution, the same Authority that Instituted, might with equal reason repeal them; and when they are so repealed, the whole reason that made them obligatory before is entirely taken away, and they become again, what they were at first, things indifferent. To fay, that God has, or ever will declare any law null and void, which has a natural or necesfary tendency to the good of mankind, is an affertion that cannot be juffified, neither ought it to be credited. But to fay, that God may enact Laws about things in their own nature indifferent, and when he fees fit, repeal those Laws again, is only faying, that he may treat things V. implies no contradiction to any known Attribute of God, it is not at all inconfishent with the nature and reasons of things; but on the contrary, it is treating things according to their own na-

ture.

Having faid fo much of these rites and modes of worship, upon which the Jews laid the greatest stress; I need fay the less of their private ordinances, which confifted in a diffinction of meats and drinks, in outward purifications and washings and other customs not respecting Religion, but civil Life: which depended upon circumstances peculiar to that People at that time, and not upon any inherent goodness in the things themselves. For how is a Man the better or the worse for what he eats or drinks; fo he does it with Moderation and Temperance, for Health and not for Sensuality? All the Creatures of God were declared from the first to be good, and were given man for his use and service. There is certainly no difference in a moral fense between the Fruits of the third and those of the fifth year. Nor is a man the better, let the hair of his head or beard be cut in what form it will. Yet in these

and many like cases they were required SERM. to make a difference; Laws they had V. to regulate their conduct in these reor impartiality would ever reckon irrepealable; and in my opinion, they who contend for the perpetuity of fuch laws, are so far from doing any credit to that Religion, that they cannot by any other imputation render its authority more suspected.

For, confider these Laws as founded upon temporary motives, arising from the particular circumstances of the Jewish People, at the time of their delivery; and so a rational account may be given of their institution, and they may be justified upon principles conforant to the wisdom of God who gave them. But consider them as Laws. which may upon no account be abrogated, and it will not be easie to account for them, but upon the principles of mere Superstition. The repeal of them therefore was so far from being inconfiftent with the character of a true Prophet, that (all circumstances considered) nothing could be more reasonable, than that they should be repealed. And I believe an indifferent judge in this case would be more apt V. by Divine Authority, than the Repeal of them. And the better able any man is to account for their Institution, the more plainly he will perceive the rea-

fonableness of their Repeal.

Now in order to discover the Motives, upon which these Laws were founded, it will be necessary to know in some measure the temper and circumstances of the Jewish people at the time, when these Laws were given. They were a people extremely proce to idelatry and superstition. For this reason we find Moses, in every discourfe, and upon every occasion, cautioning them against following other Gods. They had lived a long time in Ægypt, where probably they had learnt, and were grown fond of, many of their superstitious customs. They were encompassed likewise with idolatrous nations on every fide, whose Religion confifted of outward shew and pageantry. It was thought therefore (and that very justly, as appeared by the event) that all possible methods. which could be used, would be little enough to secure them on this weak fide. And therefore to humour them, as far as reasonably it might be done,

in their superstitious disposition, in or Service der to preferve them from a much .V. worse miscarriage; God indulged them with a great many needless Rites and Ceremonies; which, as they had no inherent goodness in them, to neither were they of any evil tendency. And all the external parts of workin were therefore order'd with as much coffliness and pomp and folemnity, as might probably win upon their superstitious dispositions, and keep them from admiring and growing fond of the Rites and Customs of their heathen neighbours. This was the real Motive, why so much outward form and ceremony was admitted into the worthip of a spiritual Being, who could never be supposed to take delight in it for its own fake. This Motive (though a very just one) was but temporary, arising accidentally from the particular difpofition and circumstances of the Jewish people, for whose fake these outward pompous forms of worship were in-Mituted.

And as their religious, so their civil ordinances may be accounted for upon the same observation. For being inviron'd with idolatrous Nations, to keep them more effectually from a compli-

ance.

SER M. ance with them, it was thought necess V. fary by all proper methods to keep them separate. One method was by forbidding them to eat as the heathen did. This occasion'd their Law about distinction of Meats, things clean and unclean. And so many forts of creatures and other things were by this Law declared unclean, that it wasnext to impossible for them to eat with the heathen without being defiled. This was the declared defign of God in giving those Laws, to keep them feperate from the heathen, as appears Lev. xx. 24, 25. I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people, ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean. And with the same view many other things indifferent in themselves were forbidden them. They were prohibited to round the corners of their heads, to wear a garment mixt of linnen and woollen, to fow divers feeds in the same ground; because those were superstitions had in regard by their heathen neighbours. And by the strict forbidding of them, it was intended, to break off intercourse and familiarity with them, and to beget in them an habitual prejudice against their idolatrous customs. cales

stoms. And we find this reason often SER M. subjoyn'd to precepts of this kind, That ye may be holy unto the Lord, being fever'd from other people. We fee therefore, that these and the like precepts of the ceremonial Law were not founded upon the Goodness of the things themselves, nor upon any immutable reasons; but upon Motives peculiar to that people, and to those times, when and for whom they were instituted. Which Motives, as they were sufficient to justify their first institution, will furnish us with a good Argument to justify the repeal of them, now they are ceased. Which brings me to prove,

Secondly, That the Repeal of them, the time and manner of doing it. were intirely confistent with the Wifdom and Immutability of God, who first gave them. Besides the natural and necessary differences of things, upon which are founded Laws of an immutable nature, that cannot be alter'd or repeal'd, because founded upon motives that are unalterable: there are also accidental circumstances common to human life, which at different times, as circumstances vary, require a different conduct. In the first of these cafes 31100

SER M. cafes to alter ones conduct, the reasons and motives to action continuing the fame, argues imprudence and want of stable principles in one, or the other part of fuch conduct. But to alter ones conduct, as circumstances alter, is not only an act of the greatest prudence and judgment, but is confistent with the greatest steadiness. It is prudent when a house is seized with an infectious distemper to absent ones felf from it; but when that house is freed from that infectious disease, I may frequent it as usual, without imputation of imprudence, or mutability. This instance is easily applicable to the Jews. and the institution of their ceremonial Law. There certainly was from the beginning no natural Law obliging any race or family of men, to keep themfelves distinct and separate from the reft of the world; nor any particular Laws instituted, to render that separation more strict and effectual: but all men, as of one nature and one family, were by that nature obliged to affociate and maintain friendly correspondence with each other. But the gross infection of Idolatry overspreading the world to fuch a degree, that the worship of the one true God was almost confined to one 2 1. A +

one particular family; and that family Serm. but too much inclined to fall in with V. the rest of the world; it seem'd expedient to infinite wisdom, in order to prevent so ill an effect, to guard and sence his peculiar people with such Laws and Ordinances, as best suited their then present circumstances; and that would, during that general contagion, secure them most effectually from it.

This, as I have already shewn, was the true ground and motive, of those many Rites and Ceremonies, which are to be met with in the Jewish Religion. And so long as the Motives continued, upon which they were instituted, so long as they lived in the midst of idolatrous neighbours, it was reasonable to believe, that their obligation should last; and an attempt to repeal them might justly have been suspected. But when a New Dispensation was introduced, tending to a general reformation; when the conversion of the Gentile world, so frequently promised, was about to be compleated, and had been begun with very good success; the danger of that idolatrous contagion, which was the very Reason, nay the only Motive, why those ceremonial Laws

SERM, Laws were given, was removed: The V. whole Reason therefore of their inflitution ceafing, the Institution it self ought in reason to cease, and in my opinion became void on course. For why should it be thought a thing inconfistent with infinite Wisdom, to make temporary Laws, where the Motives for making them are but temporary? Is it ever reckon'd prudence in men to make no difference between things necessary, and things merely cir-cumstantial? If preventive physick should be thought proper in times of infection, will therefore any confide-rate man continue the ufe of it, when all danger of infection is removed? What if an able Physician did pre-fcribe it? Yet when the whole reason of his prefeription ceases, it is acting against his judgment, to continue the use of it. All things, appointed for a certain end, ought to be directed to that end, and that only: when they are otherwife applied, they are not only improper, but unacceptable. And it is impossible they should be applied to the end intended, when that end ceases to require them. How then can the Repeal of the ce-

remonial Law cast any reflection upon

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the Wisdom or Immutability of God ? SERM. Were there the same reasons for continuing it, when the Gospel had been preached to all the world, as there were for the first institution of it? Did God change his method till the Motives changed? Would it have been at all confistent with his Wisdom, to have made perpetual Laws upon temporary motives? Let not the Jews therefore fay, that we charge God with want of wisdom, or steadiness, or that we attribute any thing to him inconfiftent with those Perfections: they are the They fay real Authors of the charge. the same God, who first instituted certain wife and good Laws upon good grounds, has continued those Laws upon no grounds at all. They fay, that God, who gave those Laws with regard to the circumstances of men, has yet, without regard to the alteration of those circumstances, made them irreparable. They fay, that God now delights in things for their own fake, which he often declared to be no delight to him. For those ritual ordinances have now nothing elfe to recommend them, but their own inherent worth: if God therefore now ap-M 2 proves

SERM. proves them, it must be for their own V. fake; and if fo, God is changed.

You plainly fee therefore, that the Repeal of temporary Laws, when the End of their institution ceases, is so far from reflecting upon the Wisdom or Immutability of God, that it is a re-flection thereupon to suppose them irrepealable. The ceremonial Laws I have already proved to have been of this nature. The reason of their institution, viz. their living amidst idolatrous neighbours, is ceased; a common Covenant including all nations is establisht, and therefore all Laws of separation and distinction ought to be taken away. And what Prophet could be thought more proper to declare this Repeal than he, who came to remove the Cause of its first institution? Or when could be a more proper time to declare all Laws of separation void, than that, wherein Jew and Gentile were to be brought under one Covenant; when the glory of the Lord was to be revealed to all people, and all nations were to fee it together? Can this therefore be an objection against Christ, which feems fo proper, fo necessary to have been done by him? To fay, that Christ

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Christ was not a true Propher, though SERM. he had all the marks and tokens of his being such, because he attempted to repeal these Laws, is in effect to say, that they were irrepealable. And to fay, that these Laws were irrepealable, is to make things, dependent on circumstances, independent; respective things absolute; things, that are proper only under some circumstances, necesfary under all circumstances. I will not inlarge on this head; I have faid more than enough to justify the Repeal of these Laws, nay to justify the nonobservance of them, though they had not been expresly repealed. I shall therefore proceed in the

Third and last place to prove, in answer to some passages objected from the Old Testament. That according to the declared intent of the Old Testament these Laws were to be repealed, or alter'd. There are several places, where parts of the ceremonial Law are said to be statutes for ever. Aaron and his Sons are said to be set apart for the service of the Tabernacle, by an ordinance for ever. The method instituted for making atonement is called an everlasting statute. And many other M 3 passages

SERM. passages of like nature are to be met with. But the only difficulty arising from them is removed by the geneneral confent of all (Jews as well as other persons) who have well considered the use of this term for ever in the Old Testament. Where, befides a real perpetuity, it is often ufed to fignify a limited, but indefinite duration; and feldom a real perpetuity, but where the subject it is annexed to requires it. Hannah fays, (1 Sam. i. 22.) that the would bring her Son, that he might appear before the Lord for ever. David lays, (Pfal. lxi. 4.) I will abide in thy Tabernacle for ever. In these places the duration intended must necessarily be limited to the lives of these persons. And so must all Laws peculiarly adapted to a particular Dispensation, be limited to the continuance of that Dispensation. All their ceremonial Laws confidered them as a feparate people, were given with an intent to keep them feparate, and confequently whilst they continued in that state, were constantly to be observed by them; and were not to be disused, upon their fettlement in the Land of Canaan,

Canaan, as many Laws were, re-SERM. fpecting only their continuance in the V. wilderness. Yet still twas evident they were to have an End, because the Dispensation to which they were adapted, was not intended to continue always. Even before that Dispensation was granted, there was an express promise made of one more general *, *Gen. 22. wherein Gentiles, as well as fews were 18. to be included. That Dispensation being granted, the Jews could no longer be considered as a peculiar people, and confequently the Laws, which confider'd them as fuch, could be of no longer force.

If, according to the strictest sense of the words, none but Aaron and his posterity were to minister before the Lord for ever; then there could not have arisen (according to David's prediction) another Prieft, not of Aaron's, but of Melchisedec's order. And if the old ritual way of worship had been to be continued always; then a Priest of another order had been unnecessary and inconsistent with the Law; which expresly limited the fervice of the Tabernacle and Temple to those of Aaron's Order. And there-M 4 fore,

SERM. passages of like nature are to be met with. But the only difficulty arising from them is removed by the geneneral confent of all (Jews as well as other persons) who have well confidered the use of this term for ever in the Old Testament. Where, befides a real perpetuity, it is often ufed to fignify a limited, but indefinite duration; and feldom a real perpetuity, but where the subject it is annexed to requires it. Hannah fays, (1 Sam. i. 22.) that the would bring her Son, that he might appear before the Lord for ever. David lays, (Pfal. lxi. 4.) I will abide in thy Tabernacle for ever. In these places the duration intended must necessarily be limited to the lives of these persons. And so must all Laws peculiarly adapted to a particular Dispensation, be limited to the continuance of that Dispensation. All their ceremonial Laws confidered them as a feparate people, were given with an intent to keep them feparate, and confequently whilst they continued in that state, were constantly to be observed by them; and were not to be difused, upon their fettlement in the Land of Canaan,

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SERM. fore, as the Apostle to the Hebrews V. justly argues *, a change of the Priesthood necessarily inferred a change of the Laws relating to it. I observe further, that the old ritual worship was confined to a certain place. And is it probable, that a way of worship thus limited should be continued, when all nations should turn to the Lord? Or is it not much more probable, as the

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16.66.21 phet Isaiah observes \$\psi\$, that God would take out of all nations persons to minister before him, that is, in the prophetick phrase for Priests and for Levites? Or what greater outward Proof could be given, that God intended to be worshipped no more in that ritual manner, than by destroying, as soon as the Gospel had been generally preached throughout the world, their City and Sanctuary,

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Sanctuary, and leaving them from that SERM. time to this destitute of a Temple, and V. Sacrifices, and perfons legally qualified to minister therein? According to the Prophecy of Daniel*, who says, that Dan. 9. when Messiah should come to fulfill the 24, &c. purposes of his Prophecy, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, he should cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.

All these things consider'd, there can remain no doubt or difficulty about the Repeal of those legal Ordinances. They were Laws in their own nature repealable; the End of their Institution is ceased, and therefore they ought to be repealed; the Continuance of them would be a thing absurd and next to impossible, contrary to the declared

intent of the Old Testament, and in-

consistent with the Wisdom of God, who gave them.

Thus far therefore we are able, with the concurrent fuffrage of reason and the writings of the Old Testament, to justify our Religion considered as a New Law, not only distinct from, but repealing many things required under, the Dispensation granted by Moses. So far

SER M. far is it from being true, that the legal V. Covenant was intended to last always, that it appears from the plainest and clearest passages of the Old Testament, that it was both alterable and intended to be alter'd; that it was to be fucceeded by a new Dispensation quite different from it, and not according to the Covenant made with the Ifraelites, when they came out of the Land of Agypt. And it appears further, that all the alterations made in that first Covenant by the fecond are justifiable, not only upon the principles of reason, but by the Old Testament likewise; whereby from passages appealed to, in their strict and natural, not in any typical or fecondary, fense, it is fairly and strictly proved, that fuch alterations were intended, and might reafonably have been expected. This being proved, the Gospel has as good foundation upon the Old Testament, as any New Revelation need to have upon a preceding one. This proves them to be fairly confistent with one another; that they are not in an irreconcilable flate, as they have been represented; that no just exception can be made against the New for changing or repealing

ing any thing established under the OldSERM. Covenant; fince all alterations made by the New are agreeable to the plain express declarations of the Old, and as far as could reasonably be expected, are inflified thereby.

CHRISTIANITY the Old Tellament.



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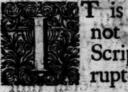
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CHRISTIANITY justified by the Old Testament.

LUKE. XXIV. 25, 26.

Then he said unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?



T is furprizing to consider, not only how grosly the Scriptures have been corrupted by the traditions of men professing to embrace

those Scriptures; but also that honest, well-meaning men have been mis-led by those corrupt traditions, and hardly weaned from, though the Scriptures plainly contradict their traditionary Notions. We have a remarkable instance of

CHRISTIANITY justified, &c. 173

of this inconfishency between Scripture SERM. and Tradition in the case now before VI. us. The Scriptures of the Old Testament speak as clearly and expresty of the Meffiah's fuffering, as of his triumphant state; in the very self-same Prophecies we meet with both these parts of his character. And yet when our Bleffed Lord appeared, we find the fuffering part fo generally disbelieved, that it became a prevailing prejudice against him, and passed as a sufficient argument to convince them, that he could not be the Meffiah promised in those Scriptures. Not only the Jews in general, but even his own Disciples were tinctured with this Prejudice; and therefore he took great Pains to prepare them against the shock, by frequently discouring with them about his approaching Passion. When they confeffed him to be the Christ, lest that should swell them with a Notion of becoming great by his means, he began to shew them what should befall him at Jerusalem, how he should suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed (Mat. xvi. 21.) When they had feen his Glory upon the mount, had heard his Mission confirmed by a Voice from

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SER M. Heaven, and were come down full (no doubt) of great expectations from him. he reassumed the same subject, and told them, the fon of man shall be betrayed into the bands of men, and they shall kill him (Ch. xvii. 221) On his last journey to Jerusalem, he put them again in mind of the same thing; and just before he was apprehended, when they were making attempts to rescue him, he told them he must suffer, or otherwife the Scriptures could not be fulfilled. And yet how little effect had all this upon them! fo confounded were they at his Sufferings, that (notwithstanding they had been witnesses to the integrity of his Life, the purity of his Doctrine, and the Miracles that had been continually wrought by him) their spirits sunk at once, they forfook him, and began to despair of that which they had once firmly believed, that he was the Person who should redeem I frael. Yea, though they had been told by the Women, who had been early at his Sepulchre the third day after his Crucifixion, that his Body did not remain in the Grave, that they had feen a vision of Angels, who declared him rifen; yet Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. And

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And in this temper did their Master SERM. find them, when he joined himself to two of them that were walking into the country, and difcourfing on this fubject. Upon which he could not help upbraiding them with their ignorance and disbelief of their own Scriptures: wherein the fuffering part, with which they were offended, was revealed in the plainest words imaginable, and spoken of as antecedent to the fuccelsful and more triumphant part of his character. O fools and flow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

But if the case were, as it is reprefented, that there is no clear Prophefy relating to this, or any other, part of the Messiah's character; if the Prophesies appealed to on this occasion were fuch, as in their obvious sense related to other matters, and could not, but in some secondary, or typical, or allegorical sense, be applied to Christ; there could have been no just ground for this severe reproof, nor for that sharp question, Ought not Christ to have suffered? This does not found like an appeal to any bidden mystical meaning of words, that in their plain and

SERM. and obvious sense signified a very dif-VI. ferent thing: one would rather take it at first reading to be an appeal to the common sense of men; supposing the passages appealed to so plain and full to the purpose, that they could not easily be misunderstood, or misap-

plied.

What Passages they were, or what Prophesies were cited by our Blessed Lord on this occasion, the Evangelist has not told us. Had they been of an abstruse mystical kind, such as needed some typical, or enigmatical construction to make them applicable to the purpose, for which they were cited, they would (no doubt) have been particularly recited. But we rather judge from this omission, that they were both eafily discovered, and as eafily applied by a fincere impartial mind; for which reason the Evangelist thought it needless, either to recite them, or to shew in what manner they were applied by our Bleffed Lord.

What prejudices the Jews were possessed with, what traditions they had entertain'd in contradiction to Christ's suffering condition, or how prevailing these traditions were, is no concern of us Christians. Our business is to

shew,

thew, that Christianity has a just foun-SERM. dation on the Old Testament, that no VI good objection can be alledged against us from the writings of the ancient Prophets; not reven against this very offenfive part of our Saviour's character, his low and fuffering condition. And had this part of the Meffiab's character remain'd wholly undiscover'd, till his appearing; had there been no preceding Revelation declaring, that he ought to fuffer; had the Old Teftament been wholly filent about his outward state and condition in this life; possibly the Jews might have triumph'd more upon the strength of their tradition; and probably but few of them would have been beat out of a notion fo very pleafing and agreeable to their wishes; possibly too the wife of this world, carnal reasoners, using maxime of reasoning and disputing wholly opposit five to those of Christians, might have reckon'd the doctrine of the Cross foolishness; and judged a mere spiritual deliverance, a deliverance from ignorance, fuperstition, idolatry, fin and the confequences of it, as a trifle in comparison of a REAL or TEM-PORAL deliverance. Yet lam of Oblotofold No semiliar opinion, .Wodl

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SER M. opinion, that some men of judgment and impartiality, confidering how expedient it was that a Reformer of the world should appear in a low and fuffering condition; how many good ends and purposes were proposed to be ferved thereby; would have thought the fufferings he underwent fairly reconcilable with the character he took upon him, though the Scriptures of the Old Testament had made no mention thereof. But this is not the cafe. Those Scriptures are not filent on this head they not only fuppose, that possibly he might, but declare politively, that he should fusier many things, be rejected and fet at naught, and at last put to death. So express and clear are they in this particular, that if Christ had not fuffer'd, he could not have been the Messiah promised therein: had his outward flate and condition been fuch, as the Jews flatter'd themfelves with the expectation of, he might have deceived many of them; but they could have had no good grounds to have received him as their Melliab.

I shall endeavour therefore in this discourse to shew, That the suffering condition of the Meffiah was exprelly enemine

forecold by the Prophets under the SERM-Old Tostament, and that in passages applicable to none but him. Whereby hope to remove another great objeon of the Jews against our Saviour; and to confute that gross reflection cast upon Christianity, that there is not any Prophecy cited from the Old in the New Testament, which does by any necoffery exposition respect the Messiah, but does in its obvious and primary sense relate to other matters, than those to which they are applied by Christ and his Apoples. The falfity of this fuggestion will very plainly appear in the instance now before us: the fufferings of the Messab being spoken of in to particular and fo first a manner, that the characters will not full any ou ther person or event whatsoever.

The 52d and 33d Chapters of Isalah are very full and clear in this particul lar: therefore they are frequently cited by the Apofiles in the New Testament. I need not mention the places where they are cited; they must frequently occur to the diligent Reader. And here we have a full defeription of a very extraordinary person fuffering in a very grievous manner. How well the

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SERM the description suits our Blessed Lord will appear by comparing the words of VI. the Prophecy with the history given of

him by the Evangelists.

They give us a particular account of his low and destitute condition; that he was born of mean parents, bred up to the servile employment of a carpenter; that, after he entred upon his publick Ministry, he had no certain dwelling place, and was generally obliged to others for the necessary supports of life. The Prophet fays (Chap. liii. 2.) He shall grow up as a root out of a dry ground: be hath no form nor comeline s, and when we shall fee him there is no beauty, that we should desire him, Meaning, that he should have none of the outward ornaments of wealth and worldly greatness, to procure the respect and esteem of them that faw him. The contempt and difgrace he fell under through the meanness of his condition, being often reproached in such expressions as these, Is not this the Carpenter's son? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet; this fcornful treatment of him is likewife foretold by the Prophet (ver.3.) He 2115

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is despised and rejected of men-we SERM. hid as it were our faces from him; VI. he was despised, and we esteem'd him The sufferings and ill treatment and perfecutions he endured, are also exprest in the words of this Prophecy. He was oppressed and he was afflicted (verse 7.) a man of forrows and acquainted with grief. (verse 3.) The unjust and ignominious death he suffered, not by natural, but by violent means, is also very particularly spoken of in this place. He was taken from prison, and from judgment (ver. 8,) or as the Septuagint renders it, in his bu-miliation his judgment was taken away. He was numbred with the transgressors (ver. 12.) He was brought as a lamb to the flaughter (ver! 7.) He was cut off out of the land of the living (ver. 8.) What death could more fully answer the Prophet's description, than that which our Bleffed Lord endured? That many should be offended in him by reason of his sufferings, particularly the Jews, which was undoubtedly his case, is no less clearly foretold in this Prophecy. Many were astonished at him, his visage was so marred. (Chap. lij. 14.) Who hath believed our N 3 report.

SERM, report, and to whom bath the arm of VI. the Lord been revealed? (Chap. liii. 1.)

We did esteem him stricken, smitten of

God, and afflicted. (ver. 4.)

Yet we find in this very Prophecy the same afflicted person represented as rising out of all his sufferings into a state of glory and triumph. Of him, whose visage was so marred, that many were aftonisht at him, it is said, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. (Chap. lii. 13.) Kings shall shut their mouths at him (ver. 15.) Even after he should make his soul an offering for fin, it is faid, He shall see his seed, be shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands (ver. 10.) And because he poured out his soul unto death, it is faid, Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong (ver. 12.) So well does this part of the Prophecy agree with Christ's refurrection on, and the fuccess of his Doctrine afterwards, that it is impossible to conceive, how it should be fulfilled, but in one that was put to death, and was afterwards raifed again. In thort, there is no part of the Prophecy, but what A STORES. exactly

exactly agrees with the character and Ser m. circumstances of our Blessed Lord. VI. He was in all respects such a person, as is here described. In his life upright and inossensive, as the Prophet says, He had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in his mouth (ver. 9.) In his sufferings meek and patient, As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth nat his mouth (ver. 7.)

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As the feveral parts of this Prophecy therefore were literally fulfilled in Christ, it remains to be considered. whether we have any good reasons to apply it to the Melliah only; or when ther it be not applicable to some other person. That it relates to some extraordinary Prophet, who should do fome things, far beyond what was ever pretended to be done by any Prophet under the Jewish Dispensation, or ever attributed to the very greatest of them, is plain from many characters to be mee with therein. He was not only to bring good tidings, to publish peace and felvation; (Chap. lii. 7.) but through him all the ends of the earth were to fee the Salvation of God (ver. 101) He was to sprinkle or purify many nations

SERM. the Kings should shut their mouths at VI. bim, that is give attention to his words (ver. 15.) By his stripes we are said to be bealed. (Chap liii. 5.) He was to make his soulan offering for sin (ver. 10.) to justify many by bearing their iniquities (ver. 11.) and to make interceffion for transgressors (ver. 12.) (Thele are unusual characters, not applicable to any ordinary Prophet. By them we understand, that God intended, and had declared before-hand, that he would fend fuch a person into the world, as we believe Christ to be: One who should bring good tidings, whose salvation should be manifest to all the world; to whom not only Jews, but Kings and Nations should give ear, and lay to heart the Doctrine revealed by him; one who should fuffer for our fins, take our guilt upon him, make interceffion to God for us, and by his fufferings heal or fave us This is the very notion we Christians have of a Messiah, and every man that has common fenfe must allow that this notion is establified by the Prophecy now before us. This is the express, obvious, clear meaning of hit wirms no oldning at 2017

that our Notion of a Meffiah to come, VI. who should redeem men from their sins, is founded upon mere Jewish tradition: for it is plainly founded upon the clearest Prophecy in all the Old Testament. We own the Jewish notion of a Messiah was founded upon mere tradition; but what is that to us? We say that their tradition has deceived them? and they cannot but be sensible it has so; for the time in which they expected him is many ages since elapsed, yet have they had no Messiah according to their traditionary scheme, and they may still look for such a one in vain.

But let us consider, how they endeavour to get clear of this Prophecy, wherein our notion of a Melliah is so plainly established in opposition to theirs. Here is certainly something promised of very great importance; something foretold, though very grievous and afflicting to the person, who should bear the principal part therein, yet very advantageous to men, who are to be healed by his stripes, to be deliver'd from the guilt and punishment of their sins, by his bearing their iniquities and making intercession to God for them. The promise of such a deliverance, as this,

SER M. this, one would think should be of more importance to us, and confequently have more of our attention, and deserve better the name of a REAL deliverance, than any temporal one, that could be proposed to us. Since therefore they have rejected our Bleffed Lord, as employ'd by God for this purpose, Let them say to whom, or to what event this Prophecy does refer? Is it spoken of the Meffich, or of fome other? Has it been already compleated, or does it remain still unfulfilled? It is certain, notwithstanding the plaines, of the Prophecy, they are not well agreed what answer to give us (I mean those Jews, that have considered it since the coming of our Saviour, for before it was generally applied to the Messich:) but fince a great deal of pains has been ufed to give it fome new turn, to make it applicable to any thing, but the Melliab; and yet they have not given one, which near comes up to the express words, or natural meaning of the Prophecy. ad an antipolitement to a beliance

Some have told us, that it was intended to be a prophetic description of the fufferings of the Jews under the an contraction a dout to a Babylonish

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Babylenish or some other captivity, SERM. and of the effects consequent there- VI. upon: And that God speaks here, as is usual in the prophetic fibyle, of a whole people under the person of one man. But this notion is fo contrary to the whole scope of the Prophecy, that it hardly deserves an answer. It is rather a direct contradiction to, than a rational interpretation of, the words of the Prophet. The fuffering person here described, instead of representing the Jewish people, is represented as suffering through and for them. We hid as it were our Faces from him, favs the Prophet (speaking in their person) be was despised and we esteem'd him not. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniguities: the chaftifement of our peace was upon bine, and by bis stripes we are healed. Here are two diffined characters, that plainly respect different . persons; on the one hand, a person greatly despited; on the other, the persons despising him; one wounded and bruifed, not for his own transgreffions, but for the iniquities of others; and these latter healed with the thripes of the former. If then, according to tient our crying tins, to a height of

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SER M, their interpretation, the Tews are meant by the fuffering person; who are meant by the persons, through whom and for whom they fuffered? Suppose the Babylonians, or any other nation, by whom they were oppressed. But is there any probability, that a Jewish Prophet speaking of aliens and strangers, should rank himself with them, calling their transgressions our transgressions; and when his real meaning was, By our stripes they are healed, he should express it thus, By bis stripes we are healed? This interpretation implies fuch a violent abuse of words, and the most common forms of speech, that ho figurative, nor any other tolerable construction will relieve it.

But to pass over this difficulty, it will further appear, that the fuffering person here described could not mean the Jews; because none of the characters fuit them. It is in no fense true, that they bore the griefs, or carried the forrows of others; that they were wounded for other mens tranf4 greffions, or bruifed for iniquities not their nown. The publick calamities they at any time were afflicted with, are by all their Prophets imputed to their own crying fins, to a height of

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iniquity hardly to be expressed. Were SER M. they stricken for the transgressions of VI. others? No. The Prophet tells us fome other person was stricken for their transgressions. For the transgression of my people was he stricken, are the Prophets words (ver. 8.) The fuffering perfon here described is said to have done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. And does this character fuit the Jaws under any captivity, or other great affliction, which the Prophet had in view ? It is plain he had quite another opinion of them, when in his first Chapter he lamented them and their captivity in these words. Ab sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a feed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have for faken the Lord, they are gone away backward: Therefore he tells them, your country is defolate, your cities are burnt with fire, your land strangers devour it in your presence, and it is de-folate, as overthrown by strangers. The Propher having given us fuch an account as this of their captivity and the causes of it, no one will easily be perfwaded, that in the Prophecy we have been speaking of, he had respect to the fame,

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Seam fame, or any other captivity: which had VI, been in effect to tell them, what none of their Prophets ever did, that when ther innocent or guilty their country flould be made a prey to their enemies, and they become exceeding furferers. So little probability is there in this interpretation, that I think none more apparently false and absurd could

have been put upon it a Association and intermedit

And as this Prophecy is in no tole rable fense applicable to the Jewish people in general; fo neither can it be applied to Jeremiab, or to any other Prophet before Christ, as some have endeavoured to apply it. It is true indeed that Jeremiah was a great sufferer, and that his fufferings were chiefly owing to the Jews and their ill treatment of him: He was despised and rejested by them; a man of formaces and acquainted with griefs : they bid as it were their faces from him; he was despised and they esteemed him not they did often him fricken, fruitten of God and afflicted ... Thus far the Prophecy fuits Jeremiab, or any other Prolice of the Jews. But the most material parts of it are in no wife applicable

to him; the characters far exceed what SER Mo was ever pretended to be true of him, VI and in many instances are directly contrary to his real character. The Meffenger or Servant of the Lord here spoken of is supposed to bring good vidings, to publish peace and fatoation. feremy's errand was the reverse of this; he was to proclaim vengeance from the Lord, defolation and destruction. The Servant of the Lord here spoken of, after his sufferings, was to be exalted and extolled and be very high; it is faid the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; that God would divide him a portion with the great, and be should divide the spoil with the frong. But Jeremy was always opposed and depressed; he was unterly unfuccessful in his prophetic Office; the travail of his Soul did not redound to his fatisfaction; nor could the pleasure of the Lord in any fense be faid to have prosper'd in his hands.

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But more than all this, was it ever imagined, or pretended to be true of ferency, that his Soul was made an offering for fin, that he bore the guilt of others, or that by his stripes they were healed? There are characters that

bespeak

SERM. bespeak an uncommon event, and must belong to somewhat more than a Prophet, more than a fuffering Prophet; to one whose sufferings should be available to procure pardon of past fins and reconciliation with God; one for valuable in his fight, that he should juflify many by bearing their iniquities. For you may observe, that the terms wherein this matter is expressed, nare fuch as are used, when atonement or fatisfaction is faid to be made for fins by Sacrifice. It was an establisht cufrom with them, in making atonement, for the offender to lay his hand upon the head of the Sacrifice; from whence it was said to bear his iniquity. In allusion whereto the person, here spoken of, is faid to bear the fin of many, and that God laid on him the iniquity of us ally Kingham and Indicating and and

And here it may be proper to take notice of some other Prophecies, which also have respect to this part of the Messiah's character. The Prophet Daniel, pointing out the time when Messiah should be cut off, takes notice that at the same time reconciliation should be made for iniquity. Chap. ix.

24. The Prophet Zechary speaking of that

that day, when there should be a foun-SERM. tain open'd for sin, and for uncleanness, VI. (Chap. xiii. 1.) gives us an account of the fuffering of the Meffiah; at the fame time, (ver. 7.) Awake, O fword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, faith the Lord of Hofts, smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep shall be scattered. If to these passages we add that remarkable character of the Messiah (Psal. cx. 4.) Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec; they must terminate in some one extraordinary person, whose business it should be, to make atonement for the fins of men by the facrifice of himself. For as the Apostle to the Hebrews argues*, this Priest of a new * Heb. 7. and different order from that of Aaron, could not be defign'd to offer the same gifts and sacrifices, which were offered by the Priests under the Law; because upon this supposition there had been no occasion to change the Priefthood: neither would fuch a change have been confistent with the Law, whereby the offering of those facrifices, which were appointed under the Law, was expresly limited to Aaron and his fons. Since therefore

But

SERM. the Priefthood was to be changed, it VI was reasonable to think that the Method of atonement should be changed likewife: and the rather because it feems improbable that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away fins. Since therefore a Priest of another more perfect order was expresly promifed, who should offer a more acceptable facrifice; fince another fountain was to be open'd for fin, and for uncleanness; and not the Jews only, but many nations also were to be prinkled, or purified; fince we find a new method was to be inflittited of making reconciliation for iniquity; and accordingly we are told by the Prophet I faiab, that there was a perfon to be expected, who should make his foul an offering for sin, by whose Aripes we should be healed; we have all the reason in the world to apply these passages (thus mutually conspiring to explain and confirm each other) to the same event: which cannot be pretended to have been accomplished in any one, but Christ our Lord, to whom they do exactly agree; and therefore we may juffly conclude that he was the person signified thereby. But

But the Jews, to evade the force of this SERM. reasoning, whereby we prove Jesus to VI. be the Messiah promised in the Old Testament; seeing that the words of these Prophecies cannot with any tolelerable colour be applied to the fufferings of the Israelites in general, or to any of their Prophets in particular; have out of mere opposition to Chriflianity, run into another notion of two Messabs, one suffering, another triumphing. And the more effectually to exclude our Bleffed Lord from being taken, upon this new scheme, for the fuffering Messiah, they have arbitrarily determined, that the fuffering one should be of the tribe of Ephraim, the other of the tribe of Judab. It is a just prejudice against this scheme, that it was never thought of before Christ appeared, but was first started by the opposers of Christianity, without either tradition, or an authority from the Old Testament to support it. Their Scriptures no where encouraged them to expect any extraordinary perfon of the tribe of Ephraim. And where-ever we find the Messiah's office or character described, or any thing faid that may feem applicable thereto, 0 2 we

SERM, we find no mention made, nor To much as a distant intimation given, as if two persons were to be employ'd therein. On the contrary it plainly appears, that the same person, who was to fuffer, was also to succeed and triumph. Both parts of his character are often join'd together, and so visibly attributed to one, that they cannot possibly be divided between two perfons. Thus in the Prophecy, which has been chiefly insisted on, as descri-bing very fully and particularly the Messiah's suffering condition; even there we have the successful part of his character display'd, and mention'd as the consequence of his sufferings and death. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his foul unto death. And we find the fame characters united (Chap. xlix. 7.) Thus faith the Lord the Redeemer - to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abborreth, to a servant of Rulers, Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall wor hip. We have also in the second Pfalm this double character of the Messiah described; which must be understood

derstood of him, because it cannot be-SERM. long to David himself, or to any of VI. his feed, but the promifed feed, in ~ whom all the nations of the earth should be bleffed. For of him only could it be faid (ver. 8.) that he should bave the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. With respect to him only could we be told (ver. 12.) that Bleffed are all they that put their trust in bim. In the two first verses we find him spoken of, as in a despised and persecuted condition, the Kings of the earth and the Rulers taking counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. At the 4th verse their malice is derided, He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision. And at the 8th verfe he has a promise made him of a glorious kingdom, extending it felf to the uttermost parts of the earth.

So little grounds had the Jews to support their notion of a double Messiah, that we see it directly, and in the clearest manner contradicted by their own Scriptures; and what they would apply to two different persons, spoken of the self-same person in the very same pas-

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fages,

SERM. Sages. And thus the pains they have VI. taken to misapply those Texts of Scripture, which we cite in favour of Chriflianity to other purposes, serve only to justifie our application of them more effectually; to convince us that they are incapable of any other application; and confequently that our Jesus, in whom alone they were fulfilled, muft be the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. For according to their last distinction they allow, that their Scriptures speak of a Messiah who should make his Soul an offering for Sin, and likewife of a Messiah who should have the Heathen for his Inheritance: and it appears from the passages just now cited, that both these characters belong to one and the fame person; and it is true in fact, that these two characters were united in Christ; consequently in both respects he answered the Meshab's character; and his sufferings, instead of being an objection, are a further con-

This was the Point at which the Jews were most offended, and therefore required to be handled in the clearest and most convincing manner.

firmation that he was the Melliah pro-

mised in the Old Testament.

Accor-

Accordingly we find the reasoning on SERM. this head to be founded upon the plain VI. and obvious meaning of the plainest and clearest passages of the Old Testament, taken in that one strict fense, which is to be found out by a critical examination of the words. And our Author, instead of endeavouring to prove the contrary, would fain prejudice the plain and natural construction of these passages, by showing how generally the notion of a temporal Mefstab prevailed in our Saviour's time; from whence he concludes, that the Apostles might seem to act an inconsistent part in interpreting the Scriptures in so many respects about Jesus as they did, according to the traditional rules and explications of the Jews, and yet re-jecting their traditional explication in respect to the temporal Kingdom of the Messiah, This charge of Inconsistency must be founded upon one of these two fuppositions; either that the Jews were always right, or that they were always wrong in their Interpretations. For if they were fometimes right and fometimes wrong (which is most reafonable to be supposed of fallible interpreters) then it was not only confiftent,

SERM, but necessary, that inspired, and consequently infallible Interpreters, should fometimes agree with, and fometimes differ from them. But we deny that the Apostles were ever governed by the traditional rules of the Jews in interpreting Scripture: because they pretended a Divine Commission to destroy the corrupt traditions of the Yews, and by vertue of that Commission to teach them better. And we must turn the charge of inconfistency upon our Author, who in one place allows that 'tis part of a Prophet's office to retrieve from corrupt glosses and traditions a former Revelation; and yet blames the Apostles as inconsistent for attempting to do, what is confessedly

But the passages we have now been speaking of, are so plain, that they needed not the interposition of a Prophet, to set a sincere honest mind right in their interpretation of them. They are direct and full to the purpose, in their obvious and literal sense applicable to Christ, and in no tolerable sense applicable to any other person whatsoever.

a part of the character they took up-

on them.

From

From hence therefore we may ob-SERM. ferve, upon what unjustifiable grounds .VI. the prejudices of the Jews were founded: not upon Scripture, nor upon passages thereof taken in their natural and genuine fense; but upon mere unscriptural tradition, founded upon temporal views and the love of worldly

greatness.

I have now confider'd their two great prejudices against the Christian Doctrine, the one concerning the Perpetuity of their Law, the other concerning the temporal Kingdom of the Meffiah; both which are so far from having any foundation in Scripture, that if their Prophets had laboured to be clear and intelligible on these two heads, they could hardly have faid any thing more opposite to their vain conceits. And we find, not only the objections of the Jews fairly answered from their own Scriptures; but also the most material parts of the Messiah's charaeter established, not by typical, but by strict and clear reasoning. As Author of a new Covenant, we find him justified in making new Revelations of the Divine Will to mankind, and also in abolishing and repealing several parts of 323249

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SER M of the Fewish Law. As Mediator of a new Covenant, we find it was not only his business to appear in a low and fuffering condition, but also to make his foul an offering for fin by dying as a malefactor, that mankind by his Aripes might be bealed. We see further, that this falvation was not intended for the Jews only, but that many nations likewife were to be sprinkled, or purified; and that all the ends of the earth were to see, and partake of, this solvation of our God. Even the offence, which the Jews took at his fuffering condition, is clearly forefold, as a circumstance attending it. So very particular are the Scriptures in their predictions concerning it! I have tryed whether these Prophecies could with any violence be wrested to other purposes: I have examined all the turns attempted to be given thereto: You fee they are capable of no other construction, no other event in history can be found, to which they may with any plausible colour be applied: In Christ they were fulfilled, and in him only.

We think it therefore not a little hard, to be told with a confident air, That the Prophecies cited from the Old

Testament

Testament by the Authors of the New, SERM. do so plainly relate, in their obvious and VI. primary sense, to other matters than those which they are produced to prove; that to pretend they prove, in that sense, what they are produced to prove, is to give up the cause of Christianity to Jews and other enemies thereof. And we think it harder still, to be thus told by one, who has not taken these Prophecies under consideration, nor attempted to shew us to whom, or to what event they do, in their primary sense, belong. But however we hope that Christianity will now, as it did at first, gain ground by opposition. If it does but put men upon examining more carefully the gounds and reasons of their Religion, we do not much question the success of it: for it needs not fear sifting; but the more it is tryed, the more it will prevail.



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ERMON VII.

CHRISTIANITY justified by the Old Testament.

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id. Thou are set of the bound received and in ned and red Acres iii. 25. his overtage

And in thy Seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. the state of the property of the



S a great deal of dishonest pains has been used, to strip Christianity of every other kind of Proof, besides that of Prophecy; fo the like

has been used, to represent that Proof by Prophecy, as inconclusive, weak, and ineffectual to support, or give any weight to the Christian Doctrine. /81911

ctrine. For if, as we are told, the SERM. Proofs taken out of the Old, and urg'd VII. in the New Testament, are either not to be found in the Old, or not urged * 1b. p. 39. in the New according to their literal and obvious sense; but in a secondary or typical, or mystical sense, that is, in a sense different from the literal and obvious sense, what wife man would build any thing upon such fort of Proof? But we have reason to think that this fuggestion is not a true one, and the rather because the Author of it has declined the only proper way of proving it. For instead of taking under consideration such passages of the Old Teflament, upon which Christ and his Apostles laid any stress, which they argued from, and urged as Proofs of their Mission and Doctrine; he has pitch'd upon five passages, which they never argued from, which they interpreted upon their own Authority, but were never infifted on as Proofs of the Authority claim'd by them. So that supposing these passages to be applied in a secondary or typical sense; yet as they were never infifted on as proofs, his fuggestion concerning Proofs taken out of the Old Testament must be en-Werd tirely

SERM tirely groundless. But then he tells you that all other Prophecies, cited by the Apolles, were thus applied and the reason given is, because tis possible in the consideration of single Prophecies to find out some other person or event, besides Jesus and the matters relating to him, to which they might be adapted without great violence to the text. Suppose this were true! will it therefore follow that none of these Prophecies were primarily intended of Christ? or in their literal and obvious sense applicable to the Christian cause? Is every thing typical, that may possibly with some violence be otherwise applied? or is that application, which is made with some violence, preferable to that which is natural, easy and obvious? or shall the violent application be reckon'd the literal and obvious one, and the natural one be deem'd typical and obscure? If this be the way to find out the natural and obvious sense of things, we must not judge of them by the rules of reason and common sense, but

by their contraries. We are sensible that most characters, be they never so

exact, yet taken to pieces are capable of being applied, otherwise than they

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were intended; but 'twill not therefore SER M. follow that the description was unna-VII. tural, or obscure, or that 'twould be distincult to find out the true intent thereof. It is therefore tying us down to very hard measure, 'tis imposing upon us the most unreasonable terms, to insist that no Prophecy can in its primary and obvious sense be applied to Christ or the Christian cause, which may possibly with some violence be applied to some other person or event.

But however, to give this sceptical disposition its full scope; to shew that we are able to satisfy their most unreasonable demands, and to justify Christianity, even upon their own terms; we do engage to produce such Prophecies which cannot possibly, without great violence, be applied to any other person or event, besides Jesus and the matters relating to him; in and throwhom they were strictly and literally suffilled. That plain and clear Prophecy of Jeremiah, foretelling a new Covenant, which God would make, different from the Law or Covenant given by Moses, is an indisputable instance of this kind. None of the Jewish Prophets succeeding Moses ever pretended

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SERM a Commission to make a new Covenant with them: they all with one confent inculcated and prest the practice of the Law given by Mofes. Most of them indeed spoke of a new Covenant to be made; but till Christ came, that Covenant remain'd unexecuted and unrevealed. He appeared a Prophet like unto Moses, like him in all the remarkable and distinguishing parts of his character; and to convince them, that God had put words into his mouth, and that the new Law he had to teach them, was of Divine appointment, he not only gave them the Proof prescribed by Mofes, but even exceeded that Proof, which Mofes himself had given in confirmation of the first Covenant. This Prophecy is fo plain that I think 'tis not capable of different constructions: neither is it possible to find out any other event, besides the promulgation of the Christian Doctrine, to which it may be adapted without great violence to the text.

And of this fort are those Prophecies which speak of another Priest, not of Aaron's, but of Melchisedec's order; of a new method of making reconciliation for iniquity; of a perfectly innocent

innocent person, who should bear our SERM. iniquities, be numbred with transgref- VII. fors, pour out his soul unto death, and thereby make it an offering for sin, that we by his stripes might be healed. These Prophecies have been thought by our adversaries so pertinent to the Christian cause, that they have been tortured and wrested with all the art and violence imaginable; pains have been taken to apply them to one event and to another, without any fuccess; all their interpretations have been forc'd, unnatural, and in no tolerable construction fuited to the plain and obvious defign of those Prophecies. But these I have already confidered.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of a train of Prophecies, to be met with in almost all the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, all centring in one great important end, bespeaking an event of such a peculiar and uncommon nature, that it cannot be pretended they had any manner of completion under the Jewish dispensation; but were in a most surprizing manner suffilled under the Gospel. And had there been no other Prophecy relating to this event, but that cited by our Apossle.

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SER M. Apostile in the text, so plain and clear VII. is it, that it might justly have raised the expectation of all, that attentively consider d it, after some new and more general Dispensation, than that given to the Jews by Moses: For otherwise how could the promise made to Abraham have been fulfilled, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth

be bleffed?

The Jewish Dispensation was undoubtedly partial, intended only for the use and direction of that single people, or family, the descendants of Abraham; as their Law-giver Moses in several places told them. The Lord hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that dwell upon the face of the earth. (Deut. vii. 6.) Holy David speaking of the Peculiarity of that Dispensation says, He hath shew'd his ways unto Jacob, his statutes and ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with other people, neither have the heathen knowledge of his laws. And we find many of their

†Pfal. 147. his laws †. And we find many of their 19, 20. Laws were given them upon this confideration, that they were to be a peculiar people, and with delign to keep them separate from other nations;

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(Lev. xx. 24.) I am the Lord your God Ser M. which have separated you from other VII. people; ye shall therefore put difference between clean beafts and unctean. But as on the one hand it is not agreeable to reason, or to our natural apprehenfions of God, (who is not a God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; rebo bath made of one blood all nations, that dwell upon the face of the earth; who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works I far, as 'tis not reasonable to Suppose, that fuch a Being intended always to confine the Revelations of himself and his will to the Jewish people only; fo oh the other hand 'tis manifest from the Old Testament, that he had purposed likewife to open a door of falvation to the Gentiles; to make his ways known upon earth, his faving health among all mations. Even then, when he first declared to Abraham his intention of chufing his family for his peculiar people, he did also at the fame time affure him, that his Bleffing should not always be confined to them; but thro' his feed be extended to all nations. His words are (Gen. xii. 2, 3.) I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, P 2

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SERM thee, and make thy name great, and VII. thou Shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse bim that cur feth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be bleffed. And not only in this, but in feveral other places, we find this promife of a general bleffing always join'd with the special bleffing promised to his family in particular. Thus (Chap. xviii. 18.) Abraham Shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be bleffed in bim. Again (Chap. xxii. 17, 18.) In bleffing I will blefs thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of beaven - and in thy feed shall all the nations of the earth be bleffed. We find the felf-same promise renewed again to Isaac, (Chap. xxvi. 4.) I will make thy feed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy feed all these countries: and in thy feed shall all the nations of the earth be bleffed. To Jacob also was the promise repeated (Cap. xxviii. 14.) And thy feed shall be as the dust of the earth -and in thee and in thy feed shall all the families of the earth be bleffed.

This is a remarkable event, not SERM. transiently glanced at, nor obscurely VII. foretold; but frequently and clearly exprest, and as constantly repeated, as was the peculiar bleffing promifed to the natural feed of Abraham. And we might from these passages only, without fearching any further, appeal to our adversaries, and demand of them, when and how this general bleffing, fo frequently promifed to all nations, to all the families of the earth, was fulfilled? Take the Bleffing promifed in a worldly or a spiritual sense, as refpecting the outward advantages of the body, or the internal improvement of the mind; either way the adversaries of Christianity will be at a loss, to find out an event in any wife adapted to the Prophecy, without doing great violence to the text. Nay let them do what violence they will to the text, let them but leave it some Meaning. and we defy them to find out any other person or event, besides Jesus and the matters relating to him, to which

But that you may fee, how unanfwerably they are prest with this difficulty; how strictly and effectually Chri-P 3 stianity SERM. Stianity is confirmed by Prophecies of VIV. this kind; I shall proceed to shew you, what a constant eye was kept to this great event, throughout all the prophetic writings of the Old Testament; how it was explained and enlarged upon by their succeeding Prophets; and how well the explanation agrees with the event, being applied to the Christian Doctrine and the influences of it. The only terms in the text that need explanation are these;

What is meant by the feed in which all the nations of the earth should be

bleffed. And

What the blessing was, which thro' that seed was to be imparted to all nations.

By the feed of Abraham, of Isaac, or faceb, may be meant the fewish people in general descended from these Patriarchs; or else some one of their section family. And if there had been no other Prophecy to this purpose, but that delivered to these Patriarchs, this question could have been determined only by the event. But as many other Prophecies were given afterwards to the same effect; these will satisfy us, that by seed was meant some one of their

their family, and not their descendants SERM. in general. For (Gen. xlix, 10.) we VII. find the tribe of Judah pitch'd upon, out of all the other tribes, as that particular family out of which the promifed feed should arise. Where 'tis said, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come, and to him Shall the gathering of the people be. Here we find the promise limited not only to the tribe of Judah, but to one of his descendants at a great distance. The feptuagint translation reads this passage thus, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till the things laid up for him come, and he is the expectation of the Gentiles. Take either construction, that the expectation of the Gentiles should depend upon one of his feed, or that to him should the gathering of the people be, it is plain that the Bleffing promifed to all nations was to depend upon one of the tribe of Judah.

And if we purfue our enquiry down to David's time, we shall find a stricter limitation still of that seed, in whom all nations were to be blessed. Who in his second P falm speaks of a particular

SERM ticular person, called in a peculiar VII. fense Son of God, to whom God had faid, Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. That this person was to be of the feed of David according to the flesh appears from the 72d Pf. where fpeaking of a Son of his, he fays, ver. 8. He shall have dominion from fea to fea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. ver. 11. All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall do him service. And at the 17th ver. All nations shall be bleffed in him, and shall call him blessed. That these things were not intended of his immediate Son Solomon, is fufficiently evident from the defcription, which in no wife fitted him. And will yet more plainly appear from the 89th Pf. that it was spoken of a Son or descendant of his at a much greater distance. For at the 28th and 29th verses, God, speaking of his mercy or covenant to be established in the feed of David, goes on to fuggest in the following verses that many of his immediate heirs and descendants would for sake his law and break his flatutes; whose transgressions should therefore

therefore be visited with severity: yet SERM. even after that, his covenant with him VII. should be made good, and the promise in his feed be fulfilled.

And this mercy or covenant to be fulfilled in David's feed we find directly applied by the Prophet Isaiah (Chap. Iv. 3, 4, 5.) to the calling of the Gentiles to a participation of the promised blessing. I will make an everlafting Covenant with you, even the fure mercies of David. Behold I have given him for a witness of the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold thou Shalt call a nation, that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee. Here we see that everlasting Covenant, the fure Mercies promifed in David's feed, were to be fulfilled in one, that should bear Testimony to the Gentiles, and thro' whom the Gentiles were to be converted unto God. And there are other places of this Prophet, which do yet more plainly fix upon one of David's line, thro' whom the bleffing promifed to all nations should be procured. (Chap. xi. 1, &c.) There shall come forth a rod out of the stemme of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots:

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SERM roots; and the spirit of the Lord shall vil nest upon him. Under the influence of whose government it is said, (ver. 9.) The earth shall be silled with the know-ledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Again (ver. 10.) In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek. The seed then, in which 'twas promised that all the nations of the earth should be blessed, could not mean the Jewish people in general, but one descended from Abraham, of the Tribe of Judah, of the house and lineage of David.

I shall proceed therefore by the fame method to enquire, what the bleffing was, which thro' that feed was to be imparted to all nations. The Bleffing principally infifted on in the writings of the Prophets is the Conversion of the Gentile world from that gross Idolatry, which they had been for many ages corrupts ed with, to the knowledge and worthis of the one only true God. One inflance hereof we have found already (If xi. 9.) The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the fee. With which agrees that Prophecy, (Chap. ii. ver. 2, 3.) It Shall shall come to pass in the last days, that SERM. the mountain of the Lord's bouse shall VII. be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it; and many people shall say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. And this remarkable event is foretold likewife by the Prophet Micah (iv. 1, 80.) in the felf-fame words. Accordingly we find this Conversion of the Gentiles spoken of, If hix 19. So shall they fear the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. And this was come to pais, as appears by the following verse, when the Redeemer should come to Zion and unto them that turn from iniquity in Jacob. Again God speaks of the same events (Chap. Ixv. 1.) I am fought of them that ask not for me, I am found of them that sought me not; I said, be hold me, behold me, unto a nation, that was not called by my name. To the same effect are those words of Hoseab, (i. 10.) It shall come to pass, that in the place, where it was said unto them, ye are not my people, there it shall be faid

SERM. Said unto them, ye are the sons of the VII. hving God. And again (Chap. ii. 23.) I will have mercy upon her, that had not obtained mercy, and I will say unto them, which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall fay, Thou art my God. The Prophet Zechury fays, (Chap. xiv. 8.) It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out of Jerusalem, balf of them towards the former sea, and half toward the binder sea - and the Lord shall be king over all the earth, in that day there shall be one Lord and his name one. The Prophet Malachi speaks yet more Mal. 1. 11. fully and expresly to this point From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every. place incense shall be offered to my name. and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. Holy David also speaks of this event frequently, and in the plainest terms. (Pfal. xxii. 27.) All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. And (Pf. lxxxvi. 9.) All nations

whom thou hast made shall come and

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worship

worship before thee, O Lord, and shall SERM.
glorifie thy name.

VII.

Agreeably to these passages, which fpeak fo plainly of the Conversion of the Gentile world to the Knowledge and Worship of the true God, we find the Person by whom this conversion was to be wrought, represented as inlightening them and giving them a new Law or Covenant. (If xlii. 1, &c.) Behold my fervant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my foul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till be bath set judgment in the earth, and the ifles Shall wait for his law. I the Lord have called thee - and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles : To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prifoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison bouse. And (chap, xlix, t, &c.) again this Perfon is introduced speaking in this manner, Listen O isles unto me; and hearken ye people from far, the Lord bath called me from the womb - and now faith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob again

See M. again to him, the Ifrael be not gathered, VII. yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he faid it is a light thing, that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my fatuation unto the end of the earth. And (chap. lx. 2.) the Prophet describes his appearing as a light arifing in a dark place. Darkness Shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory Shall be seen upon thee And the Gentiles Shall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising, the abandance of the fea Shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee .

Thus you see, as the particular advantage of the Israelites was, whilst they continued a peculiar people, that God was known, and his name great among them; that God bad shewed them his ways and gave them his statutes; they were reckoned his people, and he their God: So we are fully informed from these prophetic writings, that the

partakers of these bleffings. The know-VII. tedge of the Lord was to spread itself over the earth, and his name was to be great among the Heathen; a new Law was to go forth out of Zion, to which the Gentiles were to be converted; they also were to be taken into Covenant, and accounted the children of the living God. They too were to be sprinkled (or purified) by that messenger of the Covenant who was to make his soul an offering for sin, who was to be unto them, not only for a light, but also for salvation.

These then, as far as the writings of the Prophets will inform us, were the Blessings which thro' the promised Seed were to be imparted to all nations. To which (it appears) they had an equal title with the Jews themselves. They were excluded no one privilege, which the Jews were intitled to, by the Messah's coming; but as many, and more than the Jews enjoyed under the legal dispensation, were plainly designed for them under the new dispensation promised to be revealed.

And this confideration will ferve to convince us, how unfcriptural, how un-

justly

SER M. justly founded was the Jewish notion VII. of a temporal Messiah or Deliverer. They expected a Prince to appear in worldly pomp and greatness, that should lead them to victory and triumph, fubdue their Enemies and bring the Nations in subjection to them. According to this notion his appearance would have been terrible to the Heathen world; the end of it being to overthrow Kingdoms and States, and Subject them to the external polity of the Jews. Whereas on the contrary 'tis indisputably clear, that he was to be, in an especial manner, a bleffing to them; * Hag. ii. 7. for which reason he is called * the de-

for which reason he is called the defire of all nations. Instead of being made Slaves and Vassals to the Jewish yoke, they were to be partakers of all the Benesits of the Messiah's coming; they were to be God's people, and he was to be their God. Instead of being subdued and conquered; they were to be inlightened and converted, and partake of the salvation of our God. Instead of being made subject to the Jewish polity and government; a new law was to go forth out of Zion, whereby God should teach them of his ways, that they might walk in his paths. Instead

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of being compelled or forced into Serve, this new Covenant; they were volun- VII. tarily to offer themselves, and their submission to it is constantly express in terms, that lignify the greatest freedom and willingness: they are said to wait for it, to feek it, to gather themselves together and flow unto it. There is not a word of force or compulsion, which could hardly be confiltent with the character of him, that was to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be beard in the streets. A bruised reed Shall be not break, and the smooking flax Shall be not quenth. Ha. xiii. 2, 3

If after all it should be asked, what grounds we have to apply all the fore-elted Prophecies to the Messiah? I answer, that they all plainly relate to one great remarkable Event; that Event is constantly attributed to the ministration of some one extraordinary Person, who should be of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the house and lineage of David. None of the Prophets, under the Jewish Dispensation, ever had, or pretended to have, a commission for that purpose. The Event, tho often foretold, and the Person under

SERM. under whole influence it was to fuc-VII. ceed, frequently promifed; yet can-not our advertaries fix upon any perfon, besides Christ our Lord, to whom these Prophecies may be attributed, and in whom they were accomplish'd. We judge therefore, that as the Mef-fiab was to exceed, in the greatness of his commission and dignity of his office, all the preceding Prophets; nothing more worthy the character of fuch an extraordinary messenger can be thought of, than that he should be a Blessing to all nations; that he should recover a perverted world from the groffest ignorance, superstition and ido-latry, to the worship of the true God. It is a great and glorious purpose, a design worthy of a good and gracious God to propose and to countenance in the most effectual manner. And what-ever the Jews might expect from their Messiah, this we are assured of, that no greater character could be given him, no Commission of a higher and more important nature, than to make the ways of God known upon earth, bis saving health among all nations. And if this observation needs an Authority to support it, we can appeal to right often loretold, and the under

their own Scriptures for one, where Serm. It is made a light thing to raife up the VII. tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved Israel, in comparison of being a light to the Gentiles and for salvation to the ends of the earth. If therefore Is 49.6. it be allowed, as it certainly must, that the Messiah was to exceed, in the dignity and excellence of his character, all the preceding Prophets and Messengers of God; then the Prophecies before cited must indisputably belong to him, as they bespeak a character of the highest and most important nature.

But suppose (for preventing a great deal of cavil and impertinence) we should drop this word Messiah; (for we are not contending about names, but things) our purpose will be as effectually ferved, and the foundation, which Christianity has upon the Old Testament, as clearly demonstrated without it. For call the Promifed Seed by what name you will; that he was to be a Bleffing to all nations; that the Gentiles were to be converted by him; that the name of God was to become great among them thro' his means; that he was to establish a new Law or Covenant with them, by vertue where-

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SER M of they should be accounted the peo-VII. ple of God; is indisputably clear from the Prophecies before cited. That none of the preceding Prophets pretended a commission for this purpose; that this great and good design was never executed, nor in any fense fulfill'd before the coming of Christ, is as undoubtedly true, and cannot be difputed. We appeal to history, and demand of our adversaries, after their strictest fearch, to tell us, when and how these Prophecies were fulfilled? what per son or event, besides Jesus and the event of his Doctrine, to which they may be adapted, without greatest violence done to the text? I do not find they have fo much as attempted to answer this question. May we not therefore with all the justice in the world, and according to the strictest rules of reasoning, insist on these Prophecies, as direct and full to our purpofe; when we are able to prove the exacteft completion thereof thro' Christ and the influence of his Doctrine?

This was the work he came about, to establish a new Law or Covenant, not with the Jews only, but with all mankind. This new Law was indeed

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to go forth out of Zion, to the Ifrue- SERM. lites it was to be first offered; but VII. not to them only. The Commission given by Christ to his Apostles was, to preach it among all nations, only they were to begin at Jerusalem. Afterwards they were to go unto the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And it is furprizing to confider with what wonderful fuccess that great work, so frequently foretold under the Old Teftament, was carried on under the influence of his name and doctrine. In lefs than forty years his Apostles, the' few in number, furnished with that mp taculous gift of tongues, with which he had qualified them for the execution of their commission, had gone over the wide bounds of the Roman empire, and in every country had made many converts; who not only embraced, but were ready to facrifice every worldly interest in the fervice of this new institution. In all places idolatry, which under one shape or other had engroffed the Gentile world, fell before it; their idols became vifibly neglected; their worshippers ferfibly diminished:

SERM. diminished; their temples were more VII. and more forfaken continually; 'till in process of time they were set apart for the worship of the one only true God. Nor did Christianity Stop its progress, till Idolatry was utterly abolished, and the knowledge and worship of the true God was generally establisht in all the known parts of the habitable world. Thereby strangely and unexpectedly fulfilling the Prophecies of the Old Testament, which had so fully and clearly foretold, for ages before, this remarkable event; which neither past experience could have fuggested unto men, nor human judgment have conceived possible, unless it had been first revealed, and afterwards countenanced, by God himfelf

And now let any impartial man be judge, whether a perion pretending himself to have particularly considered all the Prophecies cited by the Apostles in justification of Christianity, could with any justice or truth affirm, that they were fulfilled in a secondary, or typical, or mystical sense, and not in their literal and obvious sense, which they + 1b. p. 44 feem to bear in the Old Testament? Whereas in truth all those points

which

which were contested between them SERM. and the Jews (which were the only VII. points, that could need any proof from the Old Testament) were confirm'd and establish'd by clear Prophecies, not only taken in their natural, obvious fenfe; but fuch as would not bear any other construction, than that in which they were apply'd by Christ or his Apostles. Were the Jews offended that Christ should offer to establish a new Law or Covenant, or that any part of the Mofaick Law should be discontinued, which they imagined to be eternal? What could be plainer, than that their own Scriptures both admitted, and had prepared them to expect, another Covenant, different from that given them by Mofes? Were they displeased, that this new Law or Covenant was offered to the heathen and to the uncircumcifed? It was a Bleffing promifed them, long before their Law was in Being, and afterwards frequently renew'd under it. Were they offended, that the Person, pretending to be the promifed feed, should make his appearance with fo little majefty and splendor? Their own Scrip tures had prepared them to expect him daldw/sg

SERM in a flate of humiliation and fuffering.

VII. Even those Scriptures, which speak of his exaltation and glory, speak of his low and fuffering condition in the fullest manner; and at the same time declare the intent thereof, that he might make his soul an offering for sin, that we by his stripes might be healed.

All this was plainly to proceed his flate of exaltation; that therefore he was to rife again from the dead, does by necessary consequence follow from the same Scriptures.

These were the points at which the Jews stumbled. These offences therefore being removed, the Gospel became fairly reconcilable with the Old Testament, and by the Prophecies cited to determine these points, which were strictly and truly applicable thereto, the Gospel was not only vindicated from exception, but even justified by the

Old Testament nol .

This was plainly St. Paul's opinion in this case. As will appear by the defence he made for himself, against the accusations of the Jaws, before Agrippa. (Acts xxvi.) First he gives the King an account of his education in the Jaws Religion and his strict Atachment

tachment thereto; then of his con-Serve vertion, the commission he had re- VIII ceived, and his conduct in pursuance of it. This he observes had expessed him to the refentments of the Jews. Therefore to bring the matter in controverfy between them to a short iffue, he fpeaks particularly to those points, at which the Jews were offended; infilling that therein he had faid none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did fay should come: That Christ Should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles, (ver. 22, 23.) No one will imagine, that the Apostle intended to be underflood, that he taught no other ar-ticles but thefe. His defign therefore must be to speak to those articles only, which gave the Jews of-fence. They would not be perfwaded, that the Messab was to fuffer, nor confequently that he was to rife from the dead, nor that he was to make a new Covenant with the people of the Jews and with the Gentiles. In fuch circumstances, what better defence could the Apostle 91977

SER M make; what more could be needful. VIII to justify himself and to confute his adversaries; than to shew from those very Scriptures, which they pretended to be govern'd by, That the Messiah was to fuffer; that notwithstanding his fufferings and death, the Prophecies relating to his triumphant state were accomplisht in his Refurrection and the consequences of it; that he was to establish a new Covenant, and that the Gentiles were to be partakers of it? This being done, he might justly reckon his defence complete. For their objections being all removed, a further defence of himself and doctrine from the Old Testament might truly be thought needlefs.

This consideration led me to profecute this defence of Christianity from the Old Testament in the same method; to insist particularly on these points, at which the Jews were offended; and to shew that they are founded upon express and clear Prophecies, not capable of different constructions, nor of various interpretations to serve divers purposes; but in their strict and natural sense applicable to the purposes, to which they

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make:

were adapted. And I think the SERM greater stress ought to be laid on these, VII. not only because the objections of Jews are thereby fairly answer'd; but also because the most material parts of the Messiah's character, and such as were least liable to be counterfeited by an impostor, are contain'd therein. Not barely to run the hazard of, but to befpeak a state of suffering and very great calamities to himself and followers; to engage to disappoint his adversaries by rising again from the dead, and in despight of the powers of this world, the lufts and interefts and prejudices of men to convert an idolatrous world to the worship of the true God, is certainly too difinterested and too fair a proposal to be made by an impostor, and would be the readiest way to prove him fuch. No man without a full perswasion of divine countenance, could ever think to put his cause upon such an issue, or hope to fee it justified by such events as these. These events therefore ought to have a double weight in confirmation of Christianity; as fulfilling the fayings of the Old Testament; and as inflances of countenance, which cannot

SER M not reasonably be attributed to any o-

VH. ther hand but God's

The Prophecies relating to these events are chiefly insisted on by the Apostles, and most frequently appealed to in their contests with the Feren, There are other Prophecies strictly and literally applicable to the Messiah; fuch as speak of the time of his appearance, the place of his birth, and other lessmaterial circumstances of his life! and the completion thereof in Jefus is taken notice of by the Evangelists in the course of their History. But they laid no stress upon them, because they related to circumstances common to the Messiah with other persons They also went a degree further, and took notice how several passages, primarily intended of other matters, were literally true of him; and also how the events of past ages did in many instances correspond to his particular circumstances. But all this they did upon their own authority, as Prophets; and upon that authority we believe, that God in ordering those events had respect to his Son and to matters relating to him. We are therefore under no concern to enquire, whether

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whether the Talmud and other Jewiff SERM. writings will not furnish us with rules VII. to justifie these typical applications; and whether so justified they will not he arguments ad hominem to the Jews. For Christianity is better founded, than to need any recourse to such fort of arguments: and that which is not a proof to the sober unprejudiced realion of mankind, we are willing should stand as no proof at all.

Christianity, considered absolutely without respect to a preceding Revelation, had every thing to recommend it, that any Revelation coming from God could be supposed to have. The design of it is the real reformation of mankind and the encouragement of virtue and goodness in the world. A design worthy of God to countenance and promote! The first publishers of it lay under no fulpicion of imposture; they had no worldly ends to lerve by their fincerity and veracity; God alfo bearing them witness with figns and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. And if any one has a mind to confider it in the relation it bears to the Jewish Revelation which -UTG

SERM it succeeded; he will find there, be-VII. fides the express promise of a New Covenant, of a Covenant in which Gentiles as well as Jews should be included, many plain and clear Prophecies likewife, which speak of an extraordinary Prophet to come into the world: who should publish a new Law. should be a light to the Gentiles, should reduce them to the worship of the true God: who should bear our iniquities, make intercession to God for us, and by his fufferings heal or fave us. All which Prophcies are strictly applicable to Christ the Author and Founder of our Religion, and to no other person whatsoever.

These are the true Grounds upon which Christianity is built: from these we appeal to the Reason and Understandings, not to the passions and prejudices and follies of men. Allowing and requiring them, when they can find a Religion better founded, more reasonable in itself, more worthy of God for its Author, and more conducive to the happiness and perfection of human nature, to make a prudent change of the one for the other. 'Till then we think it both reasonable and

by the Old Testament. 239

prudent to hold fast the profession of Sease our Christian Faith, as the best means VII. hitherto discover'd to engage men to live as men, soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

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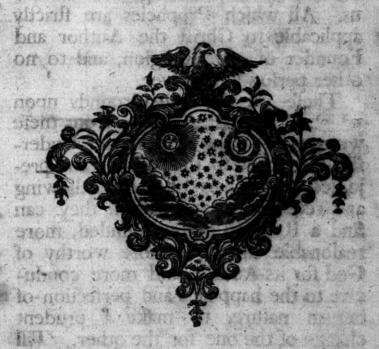
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